

ESSENTIAL



MANAGERS

MANAGE YOUR TIME



TASKS • PRIORITIZING

BRIEFING

TIPS



ORGANIZING



SKILLS

AIMS

DEADLINES • GOALS

LISTS

WORKLOAD

PLANS

DELEGATING

ANALYZING • SCHEDULES



TIM HINDLE

Learn all you need to know about allocating time wisely, from assessing the reasons that time problems arise to distributing your time realistically and effectively. *Manage Your Time* shows you how to prioritize your workload and cope with other people's demands, plus it also provides practical techniques for you to use when organizing your time. Power tips help you handle real-life situations and develop first-class time-management skills that will dramatically improve efficiency and results.

TIM HINDLE is founder of Working Words, a consulting firm specializing in business communications. As author and consultant, Tim Hindle has produced a number of titles including *Pocket Manager*, *Pocket MBA*, and *Pocket Finance*. He has been a contributor to *The Economist* since 1979 and was editor of *EuroBusiness* from 1994 to 1996.



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INTRODUCTION

Everybody needs to manage their time to some extent, whether it be at home or at work – or both. The sequence in which you perform tasks on an everyday basis has a profound effect on how much you get out of life. Most people have the capacity to manage their time better, and doing so makes the working day more productive and leisure time more fulfilling. Manage Your Time shows how you can improve your own use of time. It is full of practical advice to help you, and 101 concise tips are scattered throughout the book, giving further vital information. It begins by examining how you currently manage your time, and looks at the areas that need improvement. It then tells you how to do this in fast, easy stages from how to deal with paperwork to how to communicate in a time-efficient way. The last chapter shows you how to use your new knowledge to help others manage their time more efficiently.



UNDERSTANDING TIME

Time is our most valuable resource. By analyzing time usage on a regular basis, it is possible to understand the most efficient ways to use time, both in and out of the workplace.

ANALYZING TIME

People's attitudes toward time are complex and variable. If you want to use your time efficiently to accomplish all that you need to do at work and at home, you need to be aware of the current habits and attitudes that shape your use of time.

I Set aside time each day to review and prioritize demands on your time.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Perceptions of time and its usage vary worldwide. Differences are often reflected in the average number of hours worked per day or week, the importance of punctuality, or time spent on leisure activities. Be prepared to adapt to others' practices and timetables when working abroad.

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Our attitudes to time are constantly changing. Many of these changes are due to the advent of new technology, which affects our work, travel, and communication. The Internet, e-mail, and modems have made the exchange of information almost instantaneous. Travel, especially over long distances, has become faster and more affordable. The increase in options available has made it possible for us to do more in a day but has also increased the pressure on our time. This makes it all the more important to use time in the most efficient and productive way.

USING TIME WISELY

Everybody is increasingly aware of the cost of time. Individuals and departments are held accountable for their use of time: goals are clearly defined and financial penalties are incurred for missed deadlines. Company culture can have an important influence on how employees use their time. In too many organizations, working long hours is equated with working hard; if you leave on time, others may think you are not pulling your weight. In fact, long hours often decrease efficiency and productivity. Ways of using time become habitual, so make an initial investment of time to rethink and improve these habits. The rewards will be the ability to control your workload and more time to focus on the most important aspects of your job.

2

Identify a small chunk of a difficult task, then deal with it right away.

▼ MANAGING QUESTIONS

A manager who is constantly interrupted has little time for substantial tasks, while staff who must always consult their manager for decisions and information are held up. Use planning and delegation to minimize time-wasting at every level.



ANALYZING USE OF TIME

Few of us will readily admit that large parts of our working day are wasted. The only way for you to make better use of your time is to analyze how you use it now and then to consider ways in which you can reallocate it in a more effective way.

3 Think through your day while making your way to work.

4 Always delegate tasks which are not time-effective for you to do.

ASSESSING YOUR DAY

There are always competing demands on your time. It is very easy to spend too much time on routine things, such as reading mail, at the expense of high-priority, productive tasks. How do you divide up your day at the moment? Do you prioritize your work so that you tackle important and urgent projects first? Or do you concentrate on completing enjoyable tasks first? Are you distracted by phone calls, or do you have a system for dealing with them? Do you waste a lot of time?

COSTING YOUR TIME

It is a sobering exercise to calculate exactly how much your time costs and then realize how much of it is not being spent effectively. Use the calculation on the right to work out how much your time at work costs per hour and per minute, and then use these figures to analyze the relative cost of a few activities typical of your day, such as arranging a meeting yourself rather than asking your assistant to undertake that task. Always consider whether you should delegate tasks to others: it is generally more cost-effective to give routine tasks to more junior staff rather than doing them yourself, since your cost to the company will be higher.

▼ ESTIMATING VALUE

To find out the cost of each minute of your time, multiply your annual salary by 1.5 – to include overhead – and divide the total by the number of working hours in a year (working hours per week times working weeks per year). Divide this total by 60.

$$\frac{1.5 \times \text{annual salary}}{\text{Working hours per year}} = \text{Cost per hour}$$

$$\frac{\text{Cost per hour}}{60} = \text{Cost per minute}$$

KEEPING A TIME LOG

Maintaining a daily log of how much time you spend on particular activities is fundamental to managing your time more effectively. You may be surprised at how much time you spend chatting and at how little time you spend working and planning. Your time log provides you with a starting point from which you can assess areas to improve. How long you should keep a time log is dependent on the nature of your work.

If you work on a monthly cycle, keep the log for a couple of months. If your work cycle is weekly, a two- or three-week log should suffice.

5 Split your working day into chunks of 30 minutes each.

▼ TIMING TASKS

Compile a simple time log by dividing your day into 30-minute chunks and recording exactly how you spend your time. This will help you determine how much time you spend on useful and unnecessary tasks.

Time	Monday
8:30	<i>Train to work – looked at papers and stared out of window.</i>
9:00	<i>Went through mail. Chatted with Steph over coffee.</i>
9:30	<i>Read some e-mails.</i>
10:00	<i>Regular Monday progress meeting – started 10 minutes late.</i>
10:30	<i>Continuation of meeting. Phoned Mary to confirm lunch.</i>
11:00	<i>Started writing up list of things to do.</i>
11:30	<i>Read more e-mails and responded to a few.</i>
12:00	<i>Phoned suppliers about late deliveries.</i>
12:30	<i>Traveled to Mary's office for working lunch. Bus late. Wasted 15 minutes.</i>
1:00	<i>Had working lunch with Mary to discuss her promotion prospects. Got distracted.</i>

Time	Monday
1:30	<i>Lunch with Mary continued. Did not talk about work.</i>
2:00	<i>Traveled back to office.</i>
2:30	<i>Organized desk. Made cup of coffee. Read more e-mails and responded to Alec's.</i>
3:00	<i>Called Jim about Thursday's meeting. Started to write two letters. Robert called.</i>
3:30	<i>Phoned Anna about international sales. Talked about her family for 15 minutes.</i>
4:00	<i>Discussed today's progress meeting with Ken and Anne.</i>
4:30	<i>Started to write up progress reports, including data from today's meetings.</i>
5:00	<i>Checked e-mails again. Refiled some documents on screen.</i>
5:30	<i>Reserved table for tomorrow's lunch with Susan.</i>
6:00	<i>Took work home on train. Fell asleep.</i>

REVIEWING A TIME LOG

To analyze your time log, allocate all of the 30-minute time chunks that you have recorded into categories according to the nature of each task, then calculate the amount of time spent on each type of task, such as meetings, reading and replying to mail, helping colleagues, or making phone calls. Now calculate the percentage of your time spent on each task. This will give you a better picture of your working day and will enable you to assess how you can allocate your time more effectively.

8 Estimate how much time a task will take, then see how accurate you were.

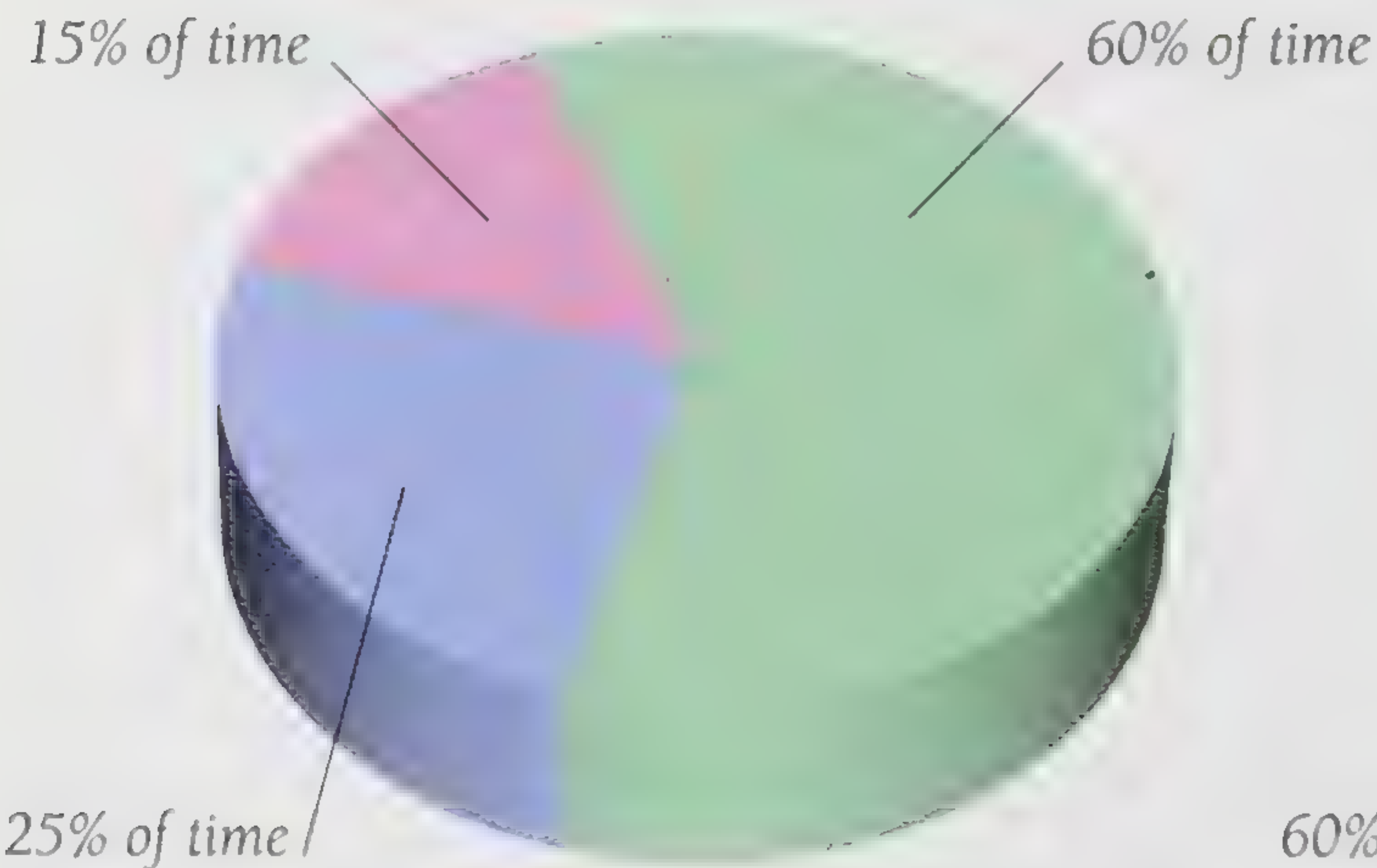
6 Review your time log to assess your work efficiency.

7 Allow for some thinking time in your schedule.

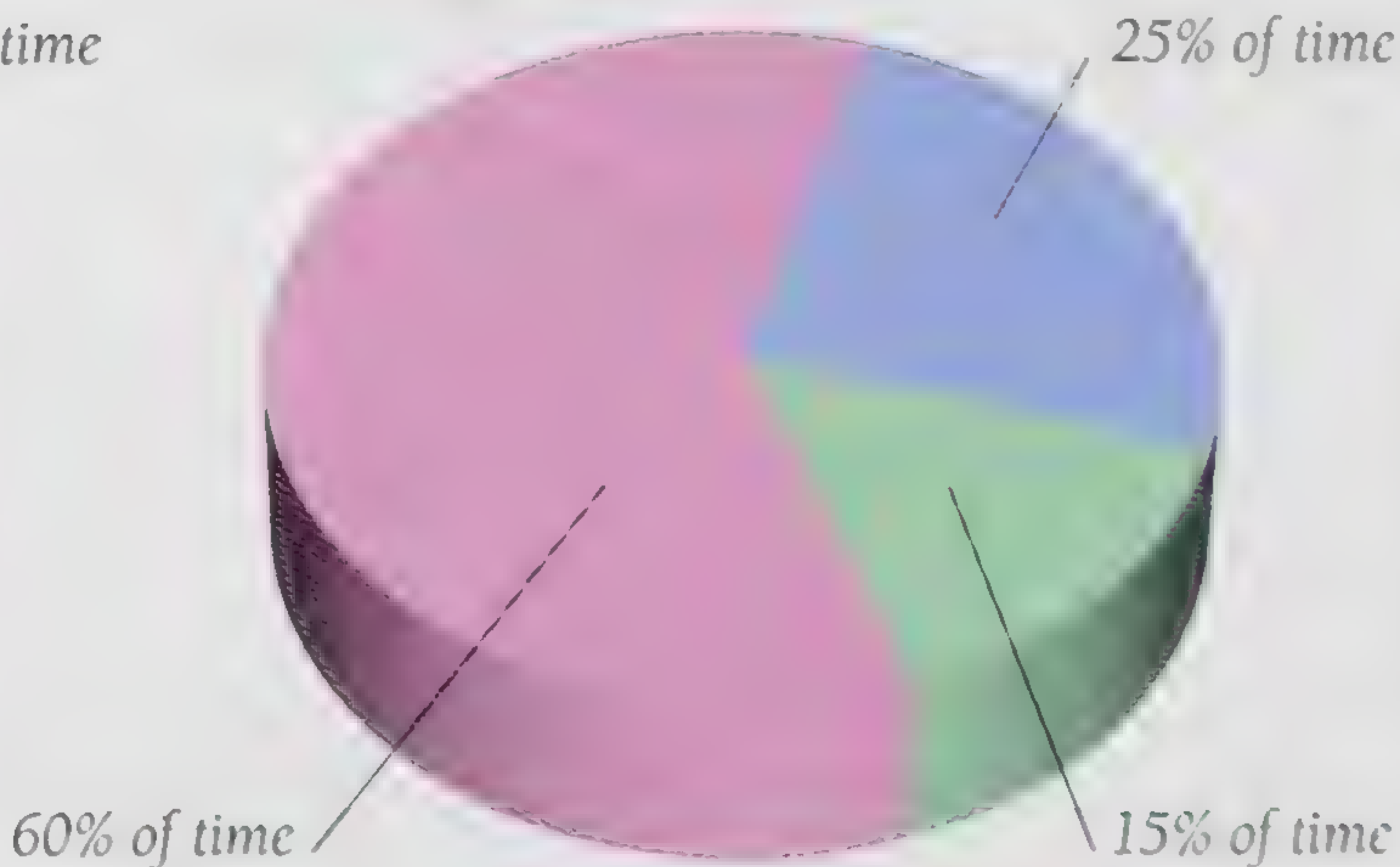
BREAKING DOWN TASKS

Look at the categories into which you have allocated your tasks, then divide them into groups: routine tasks (for example, writing a regular report), ongoing projects (for example, organizing a meeting), and tasks that would further develop your job (for example, making new contacts). Work out the percentage of time spent on each group.

IDEAL TIME ALLOCATION



ACTUAL TIME ALLOCATION



▲ ALLOCATING TIME

To be most effective in your job, you should spend about 60 percent of your time on Group 3 tasks, 25 percent on Group 2 tasks, and only 15 percent on Group 1 projects. In fact, most people allocate their time in the opposite proportions: 60 percent on Group 1, 25 percent on Group 2, and 15 percent on Group 3.

Key

- Group 1: Routine tasks
- Group 2: Ongoing projects
- Group 3: Planning and development

LOOKING FOR PATTERNS

Now that you have established how your time is being allocated, ask yourself if the breakdown meets your expectations of your working day. Are you spending too much time on Group 1 tasks rather than concentrating on important Group 3 jobs? Look at the distribution of these tasks throughout your working day. Are there times when you are very busy and others when you are slack? If so, try to find ways to reorganize your working day so that you are able to work more consistently and efficiently, and achieve more.

9 Update your time log as often as possible – memory is often unreliable.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Q** Do I do work that should be done by somebody else?
- Q** Are there patterns that repeat themselves in my time log? Am I always involved in Group 1 tasks in the morning?
- Q** Do jobs frequently take longer than I expect them to?
- Q** Do I have enough time to be creative and innovative?

ESTIMATING EFFICIENCY

How close is your work pattern to the ideal 60:25:15 time distribution ratio shown on the facing page? If you find you are spending too much time on one group of tasks to the detriment of others, work out how you can reorganize your daily schedule so that your time is distributed more efficiently. For example, if you find you are spending time on tasks that could easily be done by a junior, delegate them. This way you can concentrate your energies on the areas in which you are not spending enough time.

REVIEWING YOUR USE OF TIME

SHORT TERM

Once you have analyzed your use of time, there are several time-saving strategies you can implement immediately:

- Make a list of things to do, and update it several times a day;
- Look on your time log at wasted time and think of ways to fill those time slots more constructively in the future.

LONG TERM

If you find you have long-term problems, try changing your work patterns more radically.

- Pinpoint all the work patterns you are unhappy with. In particular, look for any bad habits you have slipped into.
- Once you have identified these problem areas, set aside time to rethink and improve your approach.

ASSESSING YOUR ABILITY

The key to successful management is the possession of good time-management skills. Think about how well you manage your time by responding to the following statements, then mark the options that are closest to your experience. Be as honest as you can: if your answer is “never,” mark Option 1; if your answer is “always,” mark Option 4; and so on. Add your scores together, then refer to the Analysis to see how you scored. Use your answers to identify the areas that need the most improvement.

OPTIONS

- 1 Never
- 2 Occasionally
- 3 Frequently
- 4 Always

1 I arrive on time and prepared for meetings.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

2 I ensure that a clock is visible in the room where meetings are held.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

3 The meetings I organize achieve their purpose.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

4 The meetings I organize finish on time.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

5 I open my mail as soon as it arrives on my desk.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

6 I skim any relevant newspaper and magazine articles.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

7

I cross my name off the circulation list for magazines and journals I do not read.

8

I read my faxes on the day on which I receive them.

9

I am able to complete tasks without interruptions from colleagues.

10

I decide how many times I can be interrupted in a day.

11

I reserve certain hours for visits from colleagues.

12

I close my office door when I want to think strategically.

13

I tell telephone callers that I will return their calls, and I do so.

14

I limit the duration of my telephone calls.

15

I allow a colleague or secretary to screen my telephone calls.

16

I decide how many telephone calls I can deal with personally in a day.

17

I skim internal memos as soon as I receive them.

1

2

3

4

18

I read internal memos thoroughly later.

1

2

3

4

19

I keep the contents of my in-box to a manageable size.

1

2

3

4

20

I clear my desk of all paperwork.

1

2

3

4

21

I delegate tasks to colleagues that I could do myself.

1

2

3

4

22

I follow up on the work I have delegated.

1

2

3

4

23

I encourage subordinates to limit their reports to one side of paper.

1

2

3

4

24

I consider who needs to know the information I am circulating.

1

2

3

4

25

I achieve the right balance between thinking time and action time.

1

2

3

4

26

I make a list of things to do each day.

1

2

3

4

27

I keep work to a certain number of hours every day – and no more.

1

2

3

4

28

I make an effort to keep in touch personally with my staff.

1

2

3

4

29

I concentrate on the positive attributes of each of my colleagues.

1

2

3

4

30

I make sure I know about the latest information technology.

1

2

3

4

31

I store e-mail messages in order to read them later on screen.

1

2

3

4

32

I perform housekeeping checks on my computer files.

1

2

3

4

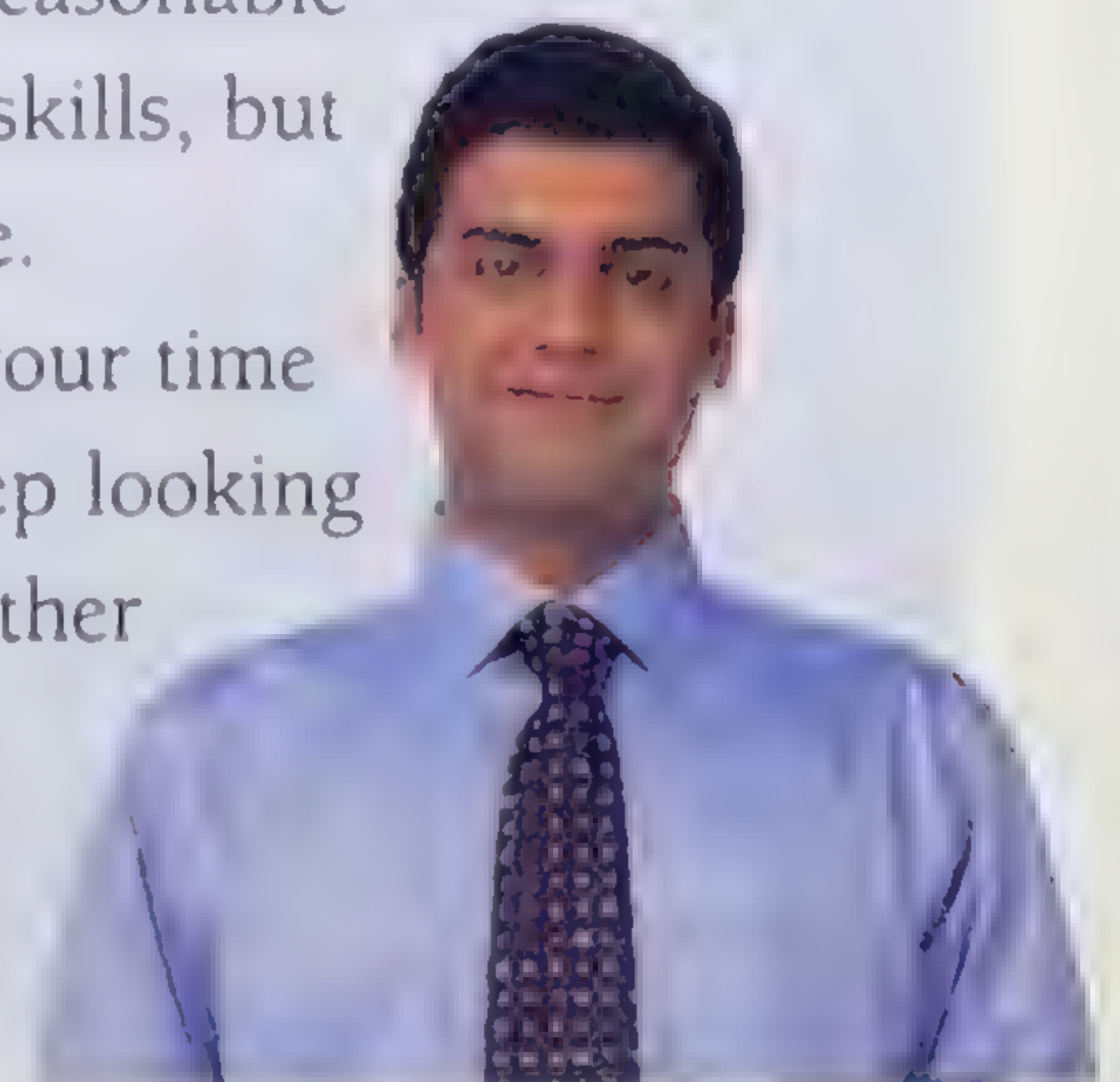
ANALYSIS

Now that you have completed the self-assessment, add up your total score and check your performance by reading the corresponding evaluation. Whatever level of successful time management you have achieved, it is important to remember that there is always room for improvement. Identify your weakest areas, then refer to the sections in this book where you will find practical advice and tips to help you establish and hone those skills.

32–64: Learn to use your time efficiently, then reduce the time you spend working in unproductive and labor-intensive ways.

65–95: You have reasonable time-management skills, but they could improve.

96–128: You use your time very efficiently; keep looking for new ways to further streamline your work practices.



PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

You cannot decide what to deal with today unless you know where you want to be tomorrow. Any plan to improve your use of time depends on being clear about your goals.

ANALYZING YOUR GOALS

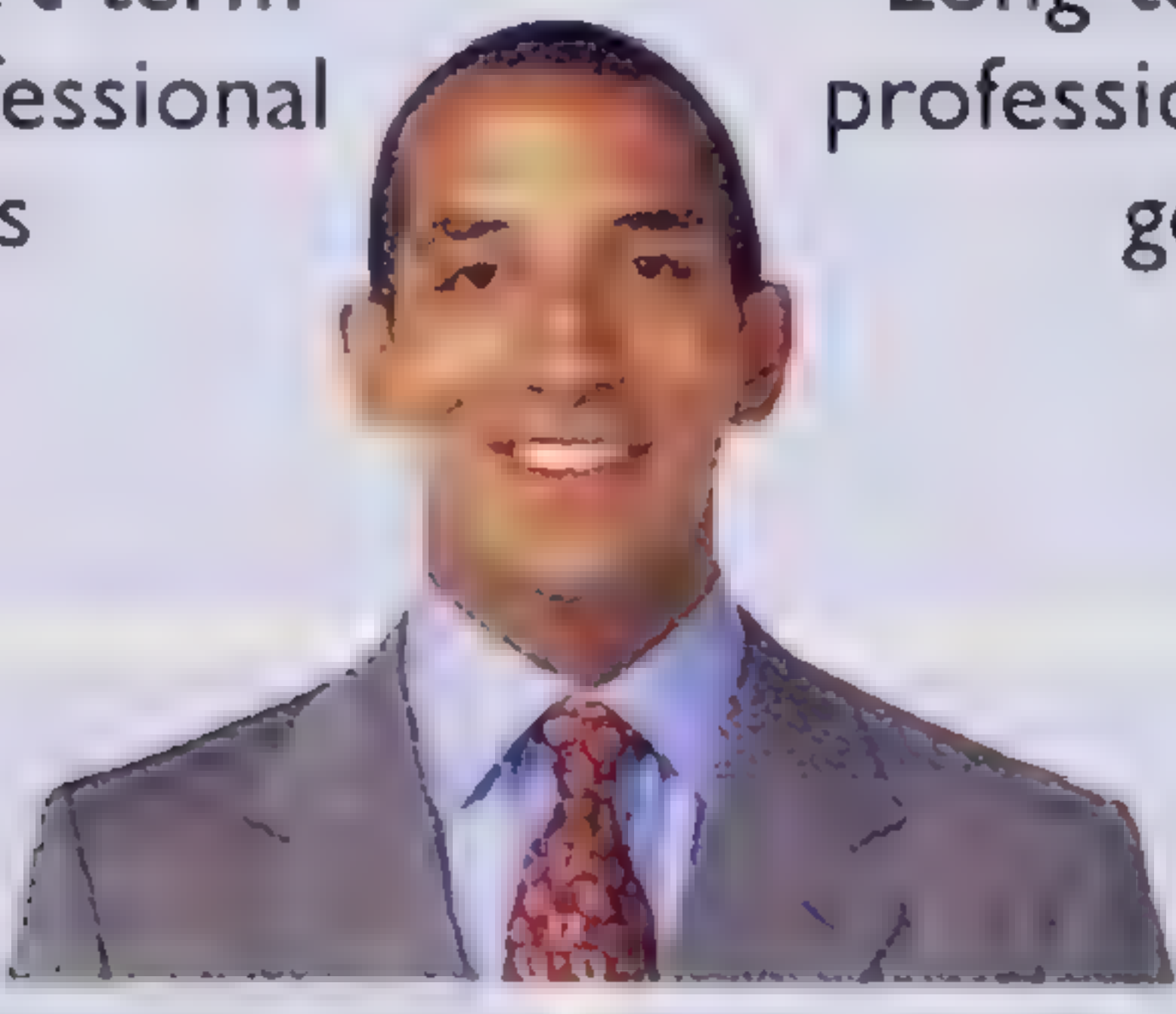
Long-term personal and professional goals are essential when it comes to setting overall targets. But in the short term a personal goal, such as starting a family, may take temporary precedence over long-term aims such as running a business.

10 Break down long-term plans into weekly and daily action plans.

BALANCING GOALS

Short-term professional goals

Long-term professional goals



Short-term personal goals

Long-term personal goals

SETTING GOALS

Write down all your goals and then divide them into short and long term, personal and professional. Consider whether your goals are realistic: while you cannot change your physical attributes, you can learn new skills at any time. Think about which skills you need to acquire to achieve the goals you have set. As the traditional idea of one job for life disappears, you may need to update certain skills in order to remain employable, and this means your professional goals can be richly varied. Finally, set a timetable – decide when you would like to achieve each of your goals.

PLANNING CAREER GOALS

To help you achieve your goals, it is important to make long- and short-term career plans that you can bear in mind as you plan your use of time from day to day. You may find it useful to write down your experience, skills, and qualifications. As well as work, you may have acquired valuable management experience from running the home or looking after siblings. Looking at these skills and experience, list all the careers to which they would be relevant.

II Draw a flow chart of your career to plan where you want to go next.

CHARTING YOUR WORKING LIFE



WORKING OUT PRIORITIES

Once you have listed your long- and short-term professional goals, you need to arrange them in priority order. Each goal will involve the successful completion of a number of tasks. Decide which tasks are the most important and need urgent attention.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Your employer's priorities may not be the same as your own.
- Priorities change. They may need to be reassessed at the beginning of every day.
- The closer you are to achieving your goal, the more important it is to prioritize and concentrate on the tasks in hand.

13 Identify conflicts of priority between you and your boss.

12 Ask for a second opinion if you cannot prioritize competing tasks.

ANALYZING YOUR WORK

Be as honest as possible about your current job. How much of your time is spent doing the wrong task at the wrong time and missing the goals you have set for that day? If you have 10 objectives to achieve each day, ranging from the mundane and routine to the urgent and complex, which of these takes priority? Analyze your working day, then decide which of your projects are routine, which concern ongoing or mid- to long-term projects, and which are extremely urgent and important or due for imminent completion. Whatever your position within your workplace, the careful planning and organization of your day will make all the difference to your efficiency at work and how successful you are at achieving your goals.

ANALYZING TASKS

Make a list of all your current, upcoming, and routine goals and tasks. Then divide them into three categories – Type A, B, or C:

- Type A: tasks that are important and urgent;
- Type B: tasks that are either important or urgent, but not both;
- Type C: tasks that are neither important nor urgent, but routine.

If you are in any doubt about how to categorize a specific task, consider it a C-task or discard it.

14 Find out whether your colleagues' priorities conflict with your own.

PRIORITIZING AND DELEGATING WORKLOAD

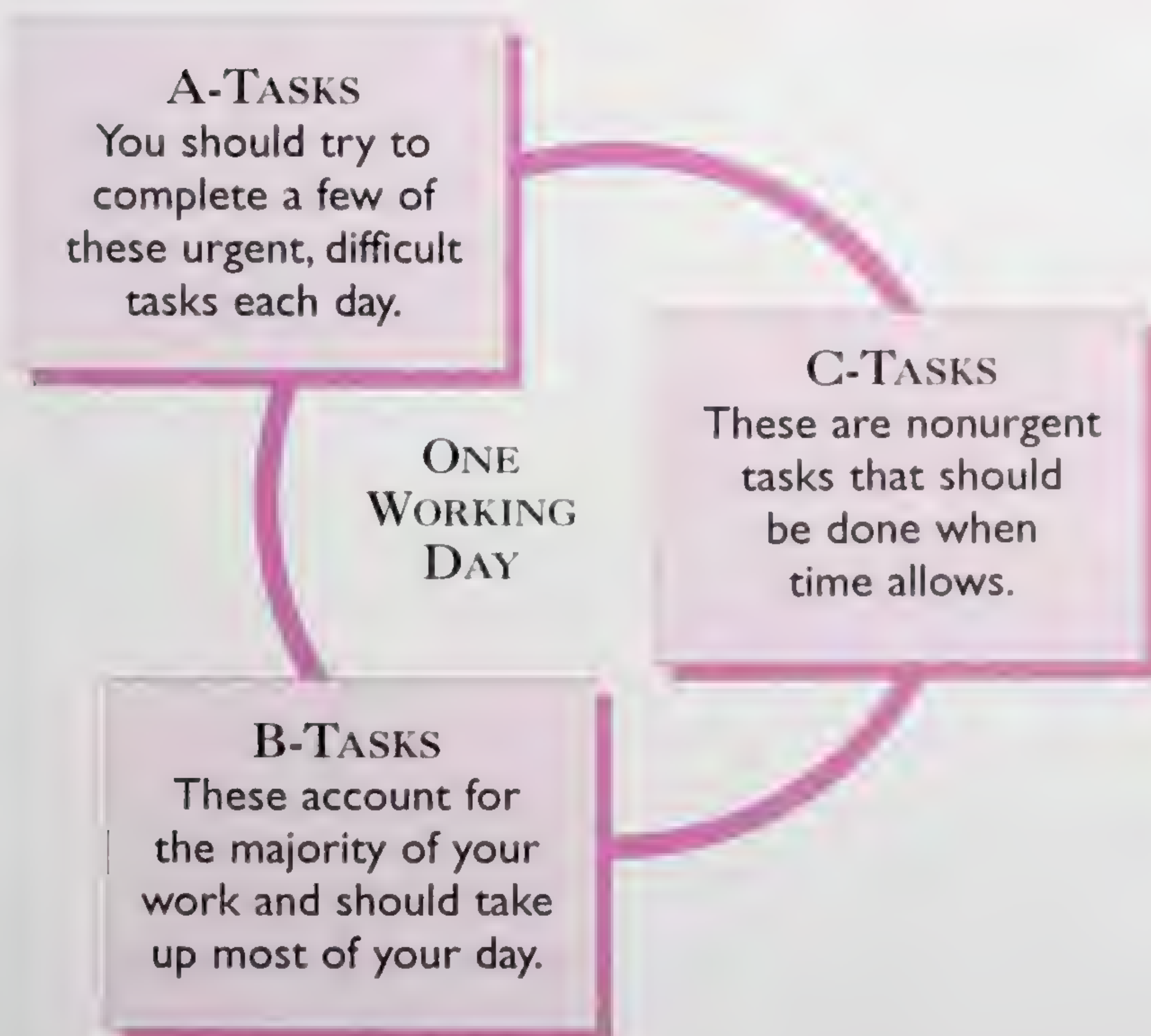
To work out your specific priorities, look again at your task list. Now make three separate lists – one each for A-, B-, and C-tasks. Starting with the A-tasks, work through the lists, deciding which tasks need input from others, which ones only you can do, and which can be delegated. Consider whether any tasks are unnecessary; if so, discard them. Involve people with the tasks that require outside input, and hand over jobs that can be delegated immediately. This will leave you with three shorter lists of A-, B-, and C-tasks that only you can do, enabling you to go to the next step: planning your day. By estimating how long it might take you to complete each of these tasks (noting down timings next to each item), you will be better placed to begin coordinating contributions from colleagues, fitting your tasks around organized meetings, and planning longer-term projects.

- 15** Classify all work engagements in your diary according to their importance.



- 16** If your schedule is full of A-tasks, then delegate or redefine them.

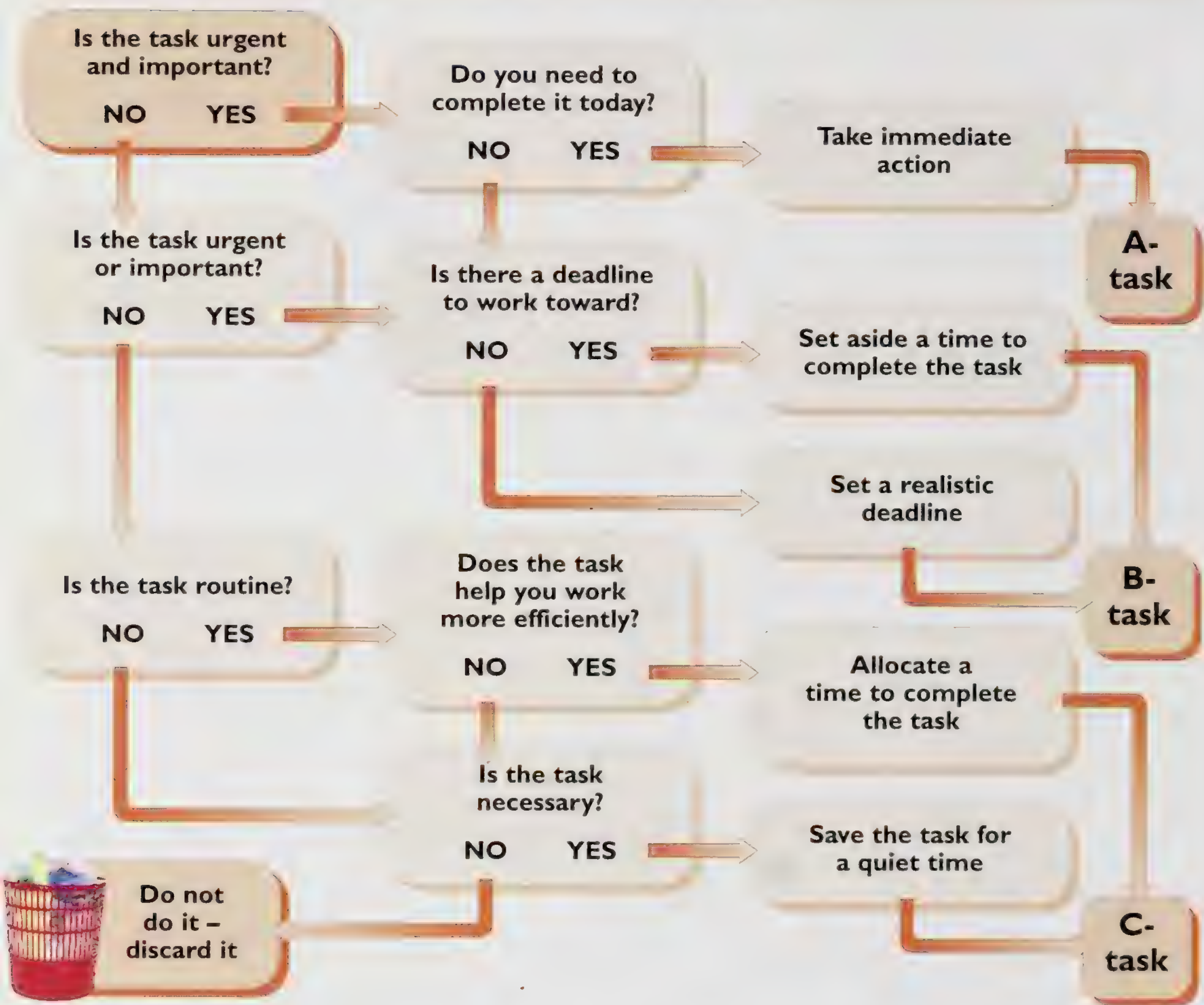
BALANCING DAILY TASKS



PLANNING YOUR DAY

Any working day should include a mixture of A-, B-, and C-tasks. Plan a selection of tasks that you can realistically achieve in one day, while making sure that the working day does not stretch to 20 hours. Spread the three types of tasks throughout the day, rather than working in sequence through all the A-tasks followed by B-tasks, and so on. This way, you can intersperse blocks of intense concentration (devoted to A-tasks) with periods of less demanding B- and C-tasks.

PRIORITIZING A TASK



BALANCING DEMANDS

Priorities change all the time because we receive information all the time, whether from the Internet, the telephone, or a colleague popping their head around the door. New information may change a task's importance or urgency. It may push an urgent job off your critical list. Why prepare a report for a meeting scheduled for tomorrow when it has been postponed for three days? When you receive any new information, quickly reassess your list of priorities.

17 Alter priorities continually in line with changes or new information.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Time spent on drawing up a plan is never a waste – it will save you time in the long run.
- Avoiding burnout is achieved by pacing yourself for a working life, not just a working day.
- Time management is doing things more effectively, not just more quickly.
- Food is vital for concentration levels and health – regular refreshment breaks are important.
- Quiet times in the office, such as before everyone has arrived, can be used to great effect.

18 To keep discussions short, avoid open-ended questions.

BEING REALISTIC

There are few things more stressful than exaggerated expectations, so be realistic about what you can achieve in a given period of time. You will not benefit yourself or your colleagues by embarking upon a punishing and overambitious schedule that you cannot maintain. Learn to recognize the limits of your capabilities, and do not undertake a project that you know you cannot complete successfully. Likewise, try to be realistic in your expectations of others. Do not demand too much from your colleagues, or you will be frustrated by their inability to complete the jobs you have given them, and they will soon become exhausted and demoralized. Once you have established what is reasonably achievable – whether for yourself or for others – stretch your expectations from time to time. People sometimes need to feel stretched and challenged at work, and they want to enjoy the satisfaction of having achieved something that is a little bit beyond their expectations and experience.

BOOKING QUIET TIME

You need some time to yourself – time to collect your thoughts, assess priorities, and concentrate on difficult or high-priority tasks. This quiet time will not become available unless you schedule it into your day. Do not feel guilty about shutting yourself off from your colleagues. Explain that they can have your full attention once you have had a short period of time free from interruptions and distractions. This is particularly important if your workplace is noisy and chaotic. Try to be self-disciplined, and use this time constructively to tackle A- or B-tasks that need your undivided attention. Remember that even a short period of quiet time will help you work more efficiently.

19 Ensure that you have some quiet time every day.

20 Do not be afraid to leave the phone off the hook.

ASSESSING WORK PATTERNS

Everybody has a natural daily rhythm to their energy patterns, rising to peaks of mental and physical performance, then experiencing troughs of low energy. Become familiar with your personal rhythm so that you can work with it rather than against it.

21 Time your physical and mental peaks so that you know how long they last.

22 Save some energy for home life and leisure activities after work.

TIMING TASKS

It is important to allocate the most demanding tasks of the day to the times when you are at your physical and mental peaks. If you are the sort of person who gets up early and goes jogging at dawn, you should make sure that you complete most of your A-tasks early in the day. On the other hand, if you have difficulty with getting out of bed before 9 a.m., you should leave your A-tasks until the late morning or early afternoon.

TAKING BREAKS FROM CONCENTRATED WORK

It is important to schedule relaxation time into your day, because your concentration levels and productivity start to decline as you tire. Plan breaks in your personal work pattern to match the times when your energy levels are low. Remember, the average person can concentrate intensively on work for only one hour without a break.

RELAXING AT WORK ►

When you take a break, let your mind and body rest. Relax at your desk by lowering your head and closing your eyes. Rest your hands on your thighs, and breathe deeply.



MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCY

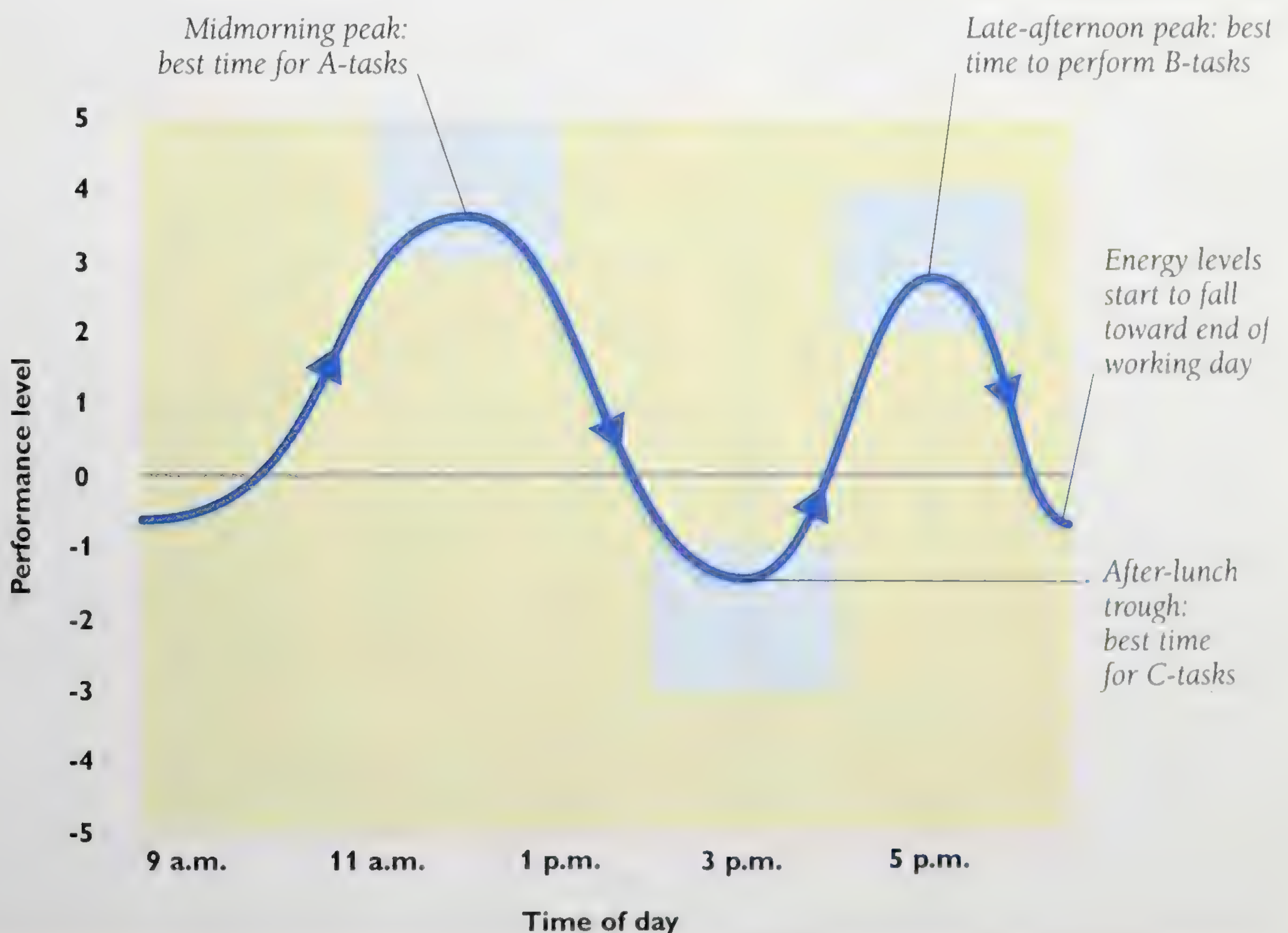
Your performance levels will fluctuate according to when you feel energetic and alert and when you feel tired. You need to understand the mental and physical cycles that your body follows each day in order to prioritize and plan your workload effectively. Note down the times at which you feel most tired or alert over a few days, then record the tasks you were performing at these times. If you were performing difficult tasks when you were tired, you were not working efficiently. In the future, try to schedule C-tasks for energy dips.

Because individual energy patterns can vary enormously, many companies now operate more flexible working hours. This allows employees greater control over their daily timetables and the opportunity to use time more efficiently by fitting work around their mental and physical cycles.

23 Suggest working flexible hours to improve company productivity.

▼ CHARTING PEAKS AND TROUGHS

Draw up a chart to show how your energy levels vary during a typical working day. Assign a number between 5 and -5 to your performance at every hour during the day (0 represents an average level of performance), and mark it on a graph as shown below. Join the marks to illustrate your energy cycle. Use this as a guide when scheduling your A-, B-, and C-tasks.



USING TIME PLANNERS

Keeping a reliable and precise record of forthcoming events, appointments, and obligations is crucial for efficient time management. There are many different types of planner available, so shop around to find the one that suits your needs best.

24 Choose a diary that looks good and that you will enjoy using.

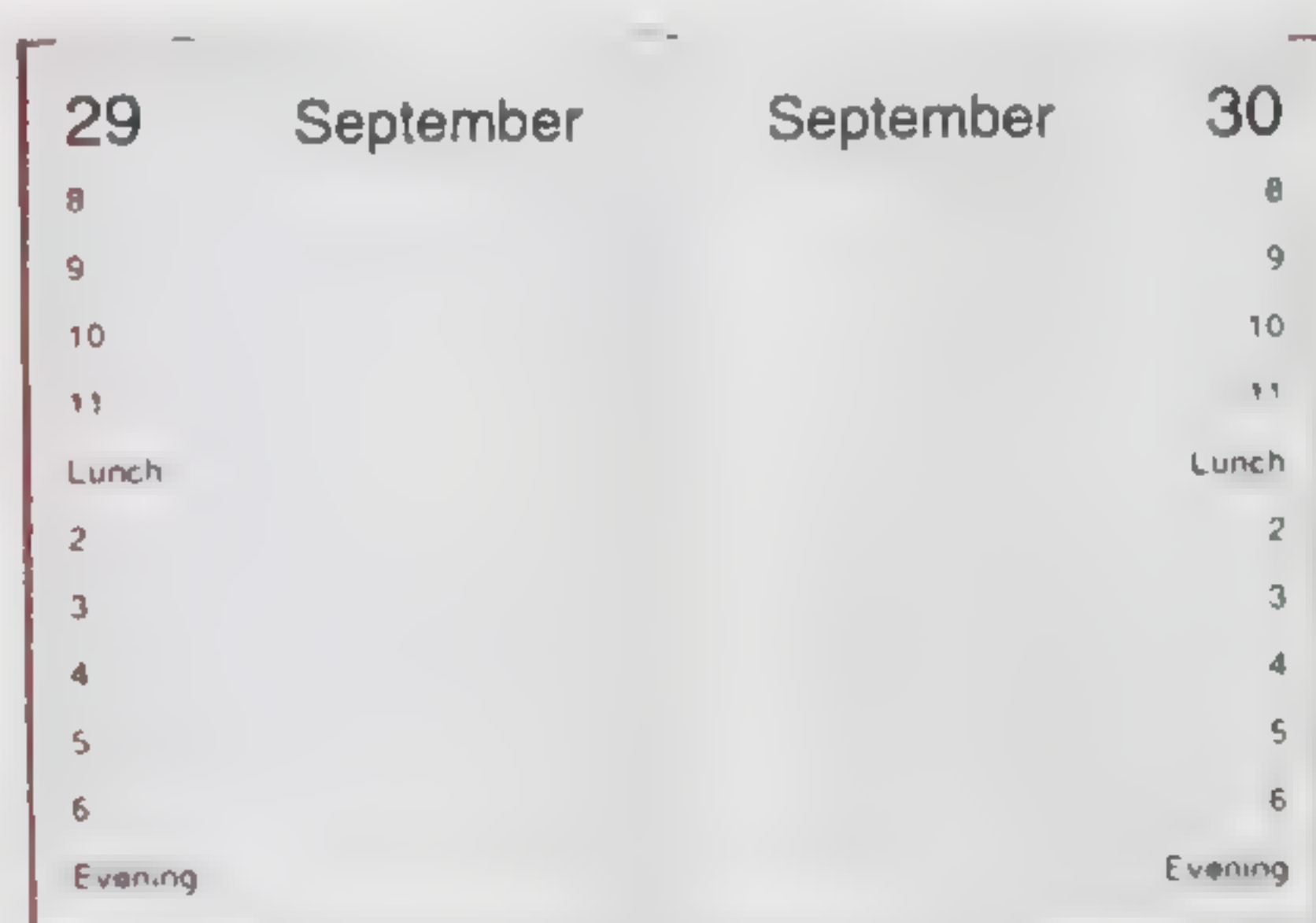
25 Always keep a pen in your diary for noting information and dates.

CHOOSING A SYSTEM

The traditional way to record future plans by hand is in a diary. Increasingly sophisticated personal planners and electronic organizers, with address books and accounting systems, are now available and are useful for keeping information at hand. The type you choose should depend on the work you need to organize. You may need a whole page for each day, or it might be more important to be able to see a week at a glance.

CHOOSING A TIME PLANNER

The type of time planner you choose will largely be a matter of personal choice. Each type, from the traditional diary to the high-tech electronic planner, has specific features to recommend it, so it is up to you to find which one suits you best.



▲ STANDARD DIARY

Record events and appointments in a diary as and when they are scheduled. It is a good idea to keep old diaries for future reference.



▲ PERSONAL ORGANIZER

Use a personal organizer as a diary, address book, weekly or monthly planner, and notebook.



▲ ELECTRONIC PLANNER

Store names, telephone numbers, addresses, appointments, and personal details in digital form.

PLANNING WITH A DIARY

Using a diary takes discipline. The first thing you need to do is to get used to taking the time to record appointments and scheduled events as and when they are made. Make a note of how long the preparatory steps prior to your meetings take, and remember to build in the time needed for preparation and travel before appointments, as well as for any followup or reporting afterward.

A-tasks should be dealt with at peak energy periods

Breaks should be spent away from your desk

B-tasks should correspond with second daily energy peak

C-tasks can be left for times of low energy

18

March

March

9	Sort in-box
10	Urgent phone calls
11	Plan budget
12	Prepare budget meeting
1	Café Nicola with John 1:10
2	Nonurgent calls
3	Budget meeting
4	
5	Brief John on budget
6	Correspondence
Evening	Drink - Jane 7:30

26 Use colored pens to denote tasks of varying importance.

▲ USING A DIARY EFFECTIVELY

Take a look at the events scheduled for each day in your diary. Make sure that you have planned the right balance of tasks and taken into account a realistic assessment of your personal, mental, and physical energy patterns.

MAINTAINING A DIARY

If somebody other than yourself is responsible for the upkeep of your diary, let them know of any appointments as soon as you make them to ensure maximum efficiency and productivity. Make sure that you have access to the latest version of your diary and that you check it at regular intervals to confirm your arrangements. Consider using an intranet system that can provide simultaneous access to a single electronic organizer from a number of different locations.

Each day, schedule important A-tasks around planned events, and make sure you complete them within a specified time. Remember to leave yourself enough slack time each day to deal with any unexpected situations that may arise.

ACCESSING INFORMATION

Take advantage of the speed with which electronic organizers can access data through their search facilities. By using key numbers and/or words, any information in the database can be called up almost immediately. Similarly, you can add a series of tabs to a personal organizer to help you open it quickly at particular days or letters of the alphabet.

MAKING A MASTER LIST

Having categorized all your A-, B-, and C- tasks according to urgency and importance, there may still be occasions when you feel confused about and overwhelmed by the number of projects that you face and the time you have in which to complete them. This is a good time to take a few minutes to make a master list, writing all your tasks on it, great and small, plus their deadlines. The very act of listing these important tasks is therapeutic and will take a weight off your mind. In addition, a list gives you a better overview of the whole situation than does a daily view of scheduled tasks. Certain solutions will suggest themselves; you may realize, for example, that the marketing plan for a new product that seemed to be far behind schedule can be postponed because the assembly line for the new product is itself running late.



▲ KEEPING UP TO DATE

Remember to add new items to your master list as soon as you receive them, and cross off any tasks once you have completed or delegated them.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Your master list should be consulted at the beginning of every day.
- Items should be crossed off your master list as and when they are done: it is very satisfying to see a list get shorter.
- At the end of each day, new items that have been added to a master list should be assessed and categorized as A-, B-, or C-tasks.
- Your master list can enable you to combine related tasks.
- When time is allocated for tasks on a master list, extra time should be left for unscheduled items.
- A master list of things to do at home should be kept, as well as a master list of work-related tasks.

USING LISTS EFFECTIVELY

Your master list should feature all your A-, B-, and C-tasks. Make the list living and ever-changing, crossing items off as you complete them, adding new tasks as they arise, and highlighting items as your priorities change. If you wish, group similar tasks together, for example, putting a star next to phone calls, a cross next to important letters to be written, and highlighting meetings to be arranged. This will help you see at a glance what has to be done and may encourage you to complete all similar tasks at the same time. You may save time at home if you also make a list of domestic tasks.

27

Set realistic deadlines. A deadline is meant to be helpful, not a major cause of stress.

28 Delegate enjoyable tasks as well as unpleasant ones.

29 Reward yourself when you meet your deadlines.

DOING UNPLEASANT JOBS

Tasks of different types suit different personalities. A job that you find particularly unpleasant, such as dealing with a difficult customer, for example, may be regarded as an enjoyable challenge by a colleague. There is nothing to be gained from performing unpleasant tasks for the sake of it, so if you can delegate appropriately, do so.

When it is unavoidable, try to do a difficult job when you are in a positive frame of mind. Do not put it off until the end of the day, when you may be tired, or wait until just before the deadline.

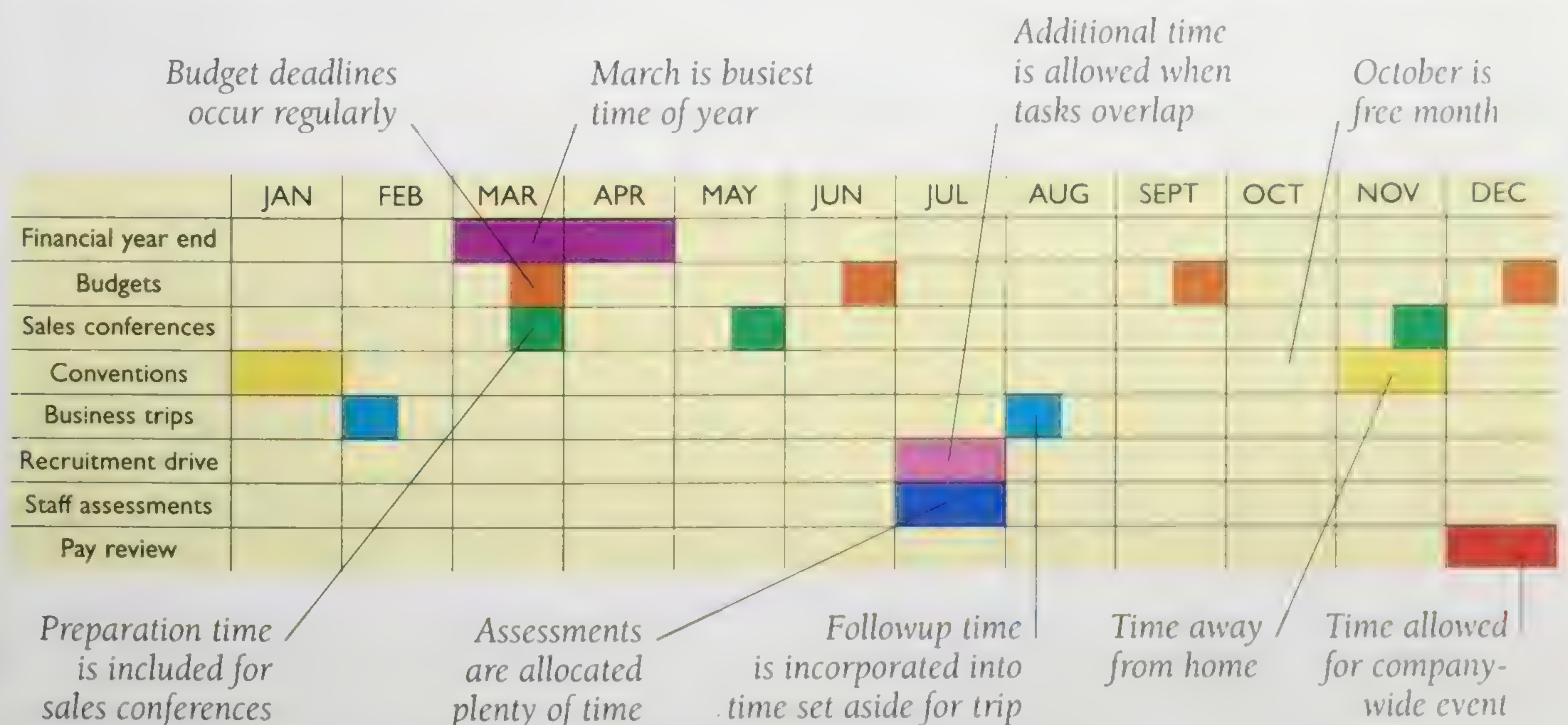
LONG-TERM PLANNING

Many tasks on your master list will not disappear when they are done. Tasks in the working year often recur in cycles – for example, you may want to aim a certain product at certain customers at the same time every year. To allocate regular time to recurring tasks, you need a long-term backup to your short-term planner, such as a color-coded wall chart. Use bright colors to map out regular events so that you can see how busy you are at a glance and can plan ahead accordingly.

30 Plan your diary no more than one year ahead.

PLANNING THE YEAR

List all regular events on a color-coded wallchart, like the example below. Allocate the time needed for each in a different color. This allows you to see if any events are overlapping and need to be rescheduled.



THINKING POSITIVELY

Time can sail past for some people and drag for others. Which of the two applies to you depends mostly on your attitude. Use the power of positive thinking to make your plans successful, and even the most distasteful of tasks will seem painless.

31 Make sure you do at least one thing every day that you enjoy.

32 Read a passage by your favorite author last thing at night.

ENJOYING LIFE

Different people have different ways of enjoying themselves, but if you do not make time to do the things you genuinely enjoy, your whole outlook can be adversely affected. Be aware of the tasks at work that give you particular pleasure, and make sure that they are well spread throughout your schedule. Plan regular leisure outings – to the movies, music festivals, or local park. In addition, try to cultivate a positive outlook, even when not engaged in the tasks that give you particular pleasure.

LIVING WELL

The beginning and end of each working day are particularly important times. Start the day with a healthy, unhurried breakfast, and sit down while you are eating to allow you to relax and enjoy it more. Make sure that you leave yourself enough time to get to work without feeling rushed. At the end

of the day, leave your workplace in a positive frame of mind. This will help prevent the difficulties of the day from carrying over into your personal life. Make a conscious effort to relax and stop thinking about work at least two hours before you intend to go to bed.

◀ EATING HEALTHILY

Think carefully about what you are eating, and at what time of day. Ideally, your day should start with fresh fruit and cereals or bread and finish with a light meal. Too much heavy food late at night can lead to insomnia, fatigue, and irritability.



DEALING WITH PROBLEMS

With a positive attitude to life, it is much easier (and quicker) to manage your time and solve problems at work. Start focusing on feeling good about yourself and your life, and you will be less likely to interpret the problems of others as your own. This will help you to be objective and constructive in coming up with methods of dealing with tight deadlines and budgets, and resolving conflict.

33 Concentrate on your colleagues' and clients' positive attributes.

CASE STUDY

Anthony, a sales executive, had been asked to attend a high-pressure meeting, which included staff from other departments among its participants.

A week before the meeting, Anthony realized that he had been convincing himself that it would go badly. He decided it was time to try to change his pattern of negative thinking into positive thinking.

First, he used various prioritizing techniques to ensure his material would be prepared

well. Then, he set about positively visualizing the meeting and its outcome. He "saw" himself stand up, clear his throat, and give the report he had prepared. He then imagined himself successfully answering all of the questions that came from the other participants at the meeting. Finally, he visualized the approval on the faces of his colleagues, especially the ones that he usually felt intimidated by.

The meeting went just as Anthony had imagined – and this boosted his confidence.

TAKING POSITIVE STEPS

Anthony was creating a cycle in which his negative thinking was producing a negative outcome. His decision to change negative aspects into positive ones was conscious, but not easy to effect at first. Each success made it easier, and eventually the habit of positive thinking became automatic.

34 Use an organizer to list weaknesses, then plan how to combat them, one by one.



AVOIDING STRESS

By definition, busy people do not seem to have time to plan their future. It takes determination to find time in a busy schedule to think about how to use the next few hours productively. Psychologically, however, it is good practice to plan your activities because it enables you to be in command of your time, putting you back "in the driver's seat" of situations that look as if they might go out of control. When you take the time to plan, you can consciously be positive – and this will help you avoid stress as well as achieve your goals.

MAKING INSTANT CHANGES

There are many practical things that you can do to improve your efficiency over the short and long term – from clearing a desk and keeping it neat to streamlining computer systems.

CLEARING YOUR OFFICE

Efficient organization of your work space can make an enormous difference. Starting with your desk, set up a system to ensure that nothing is lost among growing piles of papers. Then tackle filing cabinets, bookshelves, and your general surroundings.

35 Keep your desk clear of everything but the current job in hand.

36 Beware of self-sticking notes. They are easily lost.

37 Clean up daily. Never leave a mess for the morning.

PROJECTING AN IMAGE

You can tell a great deal about the occupant of an office from the arrangement of items on the desk, the use of color, and the general level of neatness. Superiors, colleagues, and subordinates alike will form their first impressions of you from the state of your work space – so ensure that the impression you give is positive. If you regularly receive visitors at your desk, make sure that the image you are projecting is the one that you want them to see. You will never convince a well-organized outsider that a messy work space reflects anything other than a disorganized mind.



▲ WORKING IN CHAOS

The longer you delay straightening your desk, the more difficult the job becomes and the more likely it is that time will be wasted.

PROCESSING DOCUMENTS

Think of your desk as an assembly line. Raw materials (mostly in the form of paper) come in at one end to be processed by a machine (your mind) before they are sent off to the next stage. The just-in-time logistics that companies apply to manufacturing processes can also be applied to your desk. This means being aware of how urgent papers are and where they need to go. Glance at documents as soon as they come in: if they are urgent, take action or delegate at once. Place non-urgent papers that are waiting for something else before they can be processed into a pending tray, and put all other nonurgent papers into your in-box to be processed next time you go through it.

THINGS TO DO

1. Keep work surfaces as clear as possible at all times.
2. Neaten desk drawers, and keep them ordered.
3. Keep pens, pencils, glue, and rulers together in a single, accessible container.
4. When not in use, place the computer keyboard out of the way to create more working space.

ORGANIZING PAPERWORK

Set up a system for keeping up to date with all the paperwork that appears on your desk. Deal with urgent items immediately. For nonurgent items, set aside some time each day to go through your in-box. If you need to take any action, write it down on your master list of things to do. File away other items to read later (or keep them for reference), and throw away anything that you do not need or have already dealt with.

38 Highlight key points on paperwork to speed up rereading.

▼ PROCESSING PAPERS

Take time to process all incoming papers daily. Be disciplined, and follow this simple system to keep your desk clear.

Note action you need to take

Handle, file, or delegate

Throw away everything else



▲ KEEPING A CLEAR DESK

It is good use of time management to keep your desk clear. Using desk space efficiently will keep you better organized and able to find things quickly.

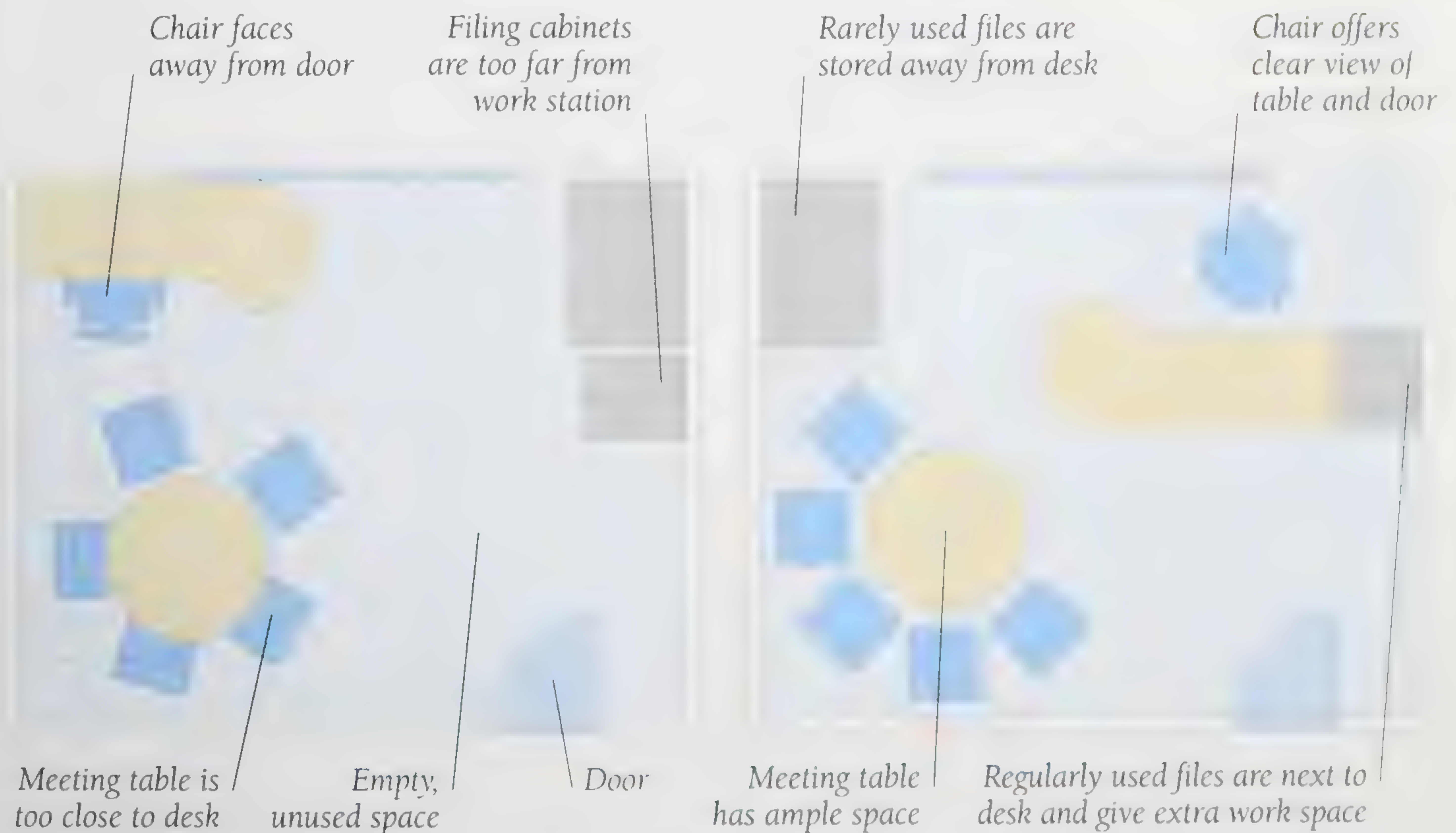
ORGANIZING WORK SPACE

The objects in your work space (desks, chairs, tables, filing cabinets, lamps) should be organized to suit you. Think about your work patterns and what you use your office for. If you have a lot of visitors, place your desk so that you can see the door and be aware of people approaching. If you regularly hold meetings in your office, arrange the furniture so that visitors can sit comfortably.

If possible, your work space should contain only those files to which you refer regularly. Keep these near your desk, preferably so that you do not need to stand up frequently to reach them. The files that you look at rarely should be put in a special storage space or, if this is not available, in an out-of-the-way corner of the office.

39 Position a clock in your office so it is visible to you and to visitors.

40 Review your filing system at least every few months.



▲ WASTING SPACE

The furniture in this office is arranged so that it is cramped in some areas and empty in others. The room must be crossed to reach the filing cabinets, while the meeting table is too close to the desk.

▲ CREATING SPACE

This arrangement makes a more efficient use of the space available. The table is well placed for meetings, and there is a good view of approaching visitors. Frequently used files are next to the desk.

FILING PAPERWORK

It is well worth taking time to set up an efficient filing system – think of the hours you can waste looking for something that has been stored at random. No one filing system is ideal. Choose one that is designed to suit the materials you need to store.

41 Set up a filing system that will grow with you and your business.

42 Go through your files regularly and discard documents that you no longer need.



ORGANIZING YOUR FILING

A filing system needs to work in the same way as a computer's search function. Key words need to trigger thought sequences in your brain that lead you easily to the place where a paper is filed. Such sequences will be determined by the nature of your work. If you are an exporter with markets in 70 different countries, your basic classification may be along geographic lines, so you might have five big filing cabinets – one for each continent. If you are a sales manager for a small company producing stationery products, you may divide your customers into two filing cabinets – one for domestic customers, the other for overseas. Each customer will be allocated their own folder.

BREAKING SUBJECTS DOWN

If you have large categories in your files, it is a good idea to subdivide them to make them more manageable. For example, a development manager who is responsible for overseeing numerous projects could group files by individual project and then subdivide each project into different sections, each with a separate file.

▼ SORTING FILES

Divide your files into categories on the basis of need, then store them accordingly. Keep those that you use all the time nearest to you and those that you refer to occasionally a little farther away. The rest should be archived elsewhere or thrown away if they will not be used again.

Often need

Sometimes need

Archive

LABELING CLEARLY

It is helpful to have a system that indicates immediately, by means of color or typography, the level or classification of each file. For example, a sales manager could file documents relating to export customers in red files tagged with red labels and those relating to domestic customers in blue files with blue labels. Each label would be annotated with the name of a customer. Whatever system you adopt, it must be easily understood by you and any other users, so keep a printed list of the sections, subsections, and their contents for easy reference.



43 File papers with no obvious home in a folder labeled "Miscellaneous."

▼ COLOR CODING

Using a system of color coding allows you to locate files of a particular type at a glance. This reduces the time you spend searching for documents, thus increasing the efficiency of your working practices.

FILING REGULARLY

Set aside a regular time for filing – either at the end of every day or at the end of each week. Do not always delegate the task of filing to someone else – it is useful for everyone to update their knowledge of the filing system. Decisions about what to keep and what to throw away are critical, so take an active part in deciding which documents are no longer required and should be discarded, and which are to be kept for future use.

44 File only essential documents that will be referred in the future.

AVOIDING INTERRUPTIONS

Sometimes interruptions are welcome, but everyone needs to work undisturbed at certain times. Make your working day as productive as possible by discouraging interruptions by colleagues and reorganizing your office so that you are less visible.

LISTING INTERRUPTORS

To reduce the number of unnecessary interruptions you receive, first draw up the following lists:

- People who may interrupt you at any time, such as your boss or important customers;
- People who may interrupt you when you are not particularly busy, such as colleagues;
- People who may not interrupt you at all.

Keep these lists in mind, and give copies to your support staff and relevant colleagues. Ask them to follow these lists as much as possible.

DISCOURAGING ► INTERRUPTIONS

Use negative body language to fend off unwanted intrusions. Turn your head, but not your whole body, toward the visitor. Use signals such as glancing at your watch.

Head turns toward visitor

Arm and shoulder form a barrier, discouraging long discussion

Holding pen signals an unwillingness to be interrupted

45

Ask your secretary or a colleague to screen incoming phone calls for you.

46

Pick up the phone to indicate the end of a meeting.

Visitor stands to one side of chair and must work hard to gain attention

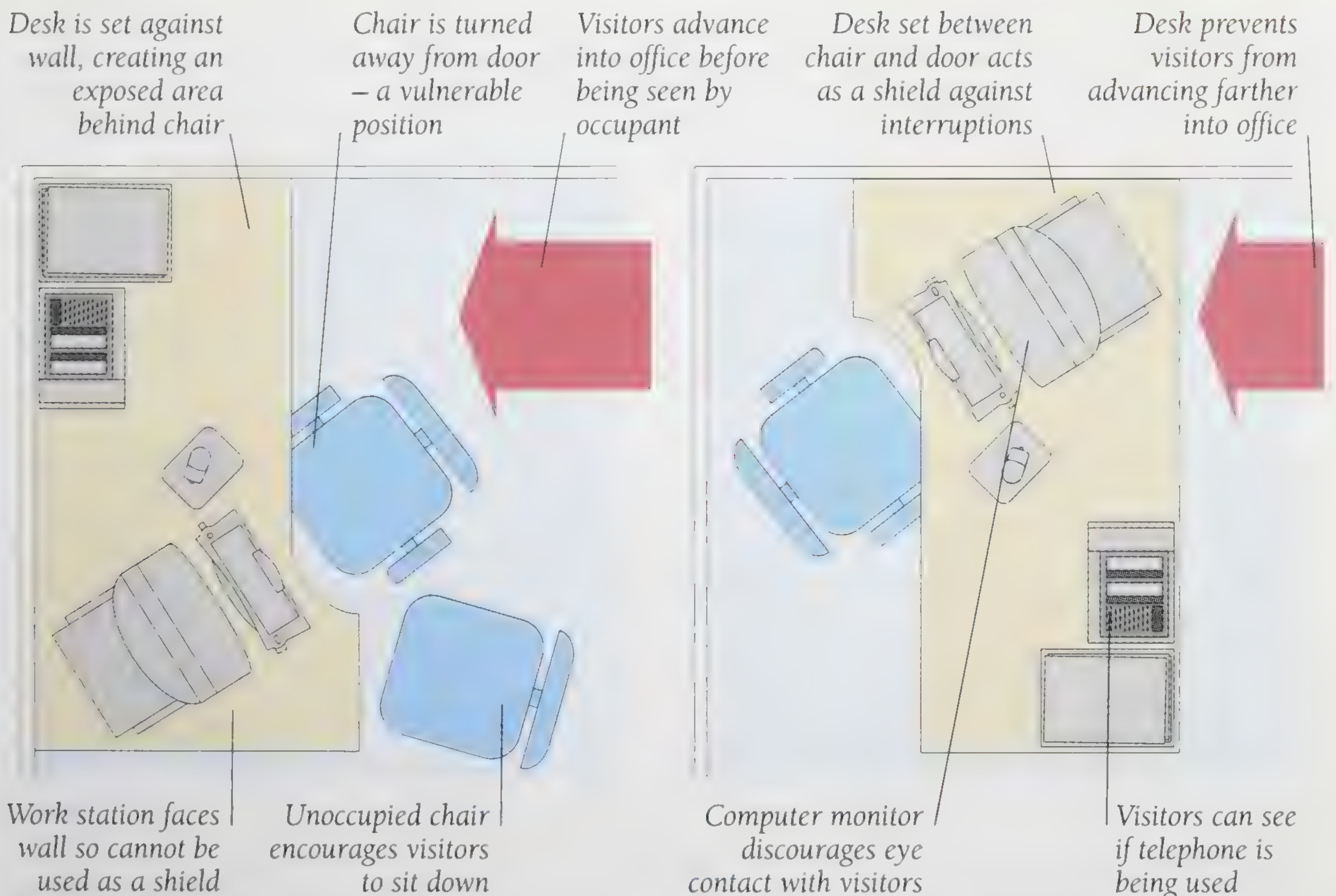


RETHINKING WORK SPACE

You are especially vulnerable to interruptions if it is easy for passersby to catch your eye. Position your desk so that you can see who is approaching the door. Keep your office door closed when you do not want to be interrupted. Even if you work in an open-plan office, you can minimize interruptions by making changes to the layout of your work space – repositioning your desk behind filing cabinets, for example, or placing your computer monitor directly in front of you. Once you make yourself less visible to staff and colleagues, they are less likely to disturb you unnecessarily.

47 Do not sit down if you are followed into your office.

48 Place your chair out of view if your door is open.



▲ ALLOWING ACCESS

In this office you will be visible as soon as the door is opened. You are seated with your back to the door and have to turn to see who is coming in, making you unable to preempt unwelcome visitors.

▲ FORMING BARRIERS

Here, a computer forms a barrier between you and anyone entering the room. Your chair faces the door, so you can see approaching visitors. The lack of a spare chair will discourage visitors from staying too long.

FILTERING INFORMATION

Most people receive hundreds of different pieces of information every working day, and processing them takes up large amounts of time. Take time to work out a systematic way of handling all the incoming information that ends up on your desk.

49 Throw away any information that you think you do not need.

50 Keep all chance meetings short by standing – it will then be easier to get away.



GAINING INFORMATION

Information comes to you in increasingly diverse forms, including the following:

- On paper (for example, via mail, faxes, memos, newspapers, magazines, journals, reports);
- Electronically (for example, via e-mail, intranet);
- By voice (for example, via face-to-face meetings, television, radio, telephone, voice mail).

Remember that some forms of information appear to be more urgent than others – but this may not be a true reflection of their importance. For example, phone calls often take precedence over mail because they are more immediate.

PROCESSING INFORMATION

Try to establish a routine for processing set information. For example, if you know that the external mail arrives at 10 a.m. and that internal messages are distributed at 11 a.m., set aside a time just before lunch for sorting through the mail. Read your electronic messages at the same time and, if you have not already done so, make some time to skim newspapers and magazines.

You will need to repeat the same process toward the end of the day to straighten your desk and to prepare yourself for the following morning. It is often a good idea to let information “stew” overnight before taking any action on it.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Messages arrive all the time and should not disrupt the work flow.
- Messages should be skimmed until their main information content is absorbed.
- If a message requires action, a note should be made and added to a master list.
- For ease of filing, a printed piece of information can be immediately coded with a folder name.
- Messages should be discarded once they have been dealt with.

CIRCULATING MATERIAL

Much of the information that comes your way can be passed directly on to colleagues or staff. Divide information into three categories:

- That which you amend or add something to before passing on – this is typical of the general internal memo or report;
- That which you read, digest, then pass on to someone else. This is typically what happens with journals and magazines;
- That which you copy and distribute – you may do this with a thank-you letter from a happy, satisfied customer about which colleagues should be informed.

51 Copy information only to those who need to know.

52 Stop subscriptions to magazines you no longer read.

HANDLING DIFFERENT TYPES OF INFORMATION

INFORMATION SOURCES

INTERNAL MEMOS AND REPORTS
Information contained in internal memos and reports can be specific to an individual, work team, department, committee, or other group.

EXTERNAL MAIL AND FAXES
The range and importance of incoming information is very wide. Mail is usually delivered at regular intervals, but faxes can arrive at any time.

INTRANET AND E-MAIL
Electronic messaging systems are being increasingly used for rapid communication and dissemination of information to individuals or groups.

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES
Much information on specific areas of a trade or profession can be sourced from a selective subscription list of newspapers and magazines.

HOW TO HANDLE THEM

- Timing is the critical element when circulating information of this type.
- Decide by when and by whom your comments or actions are needed.
- Plan to fit any action into your schedule.
- Decide what action is needed and when.
- Ascertain whether you should distribute the information and, if so, in what form.
- Ensure that any information that needs filing is filed and anything that is not needed is thrown away.
- Electronic messages can be created and distributed easily, so check if they are relevant to you.
- Do not open messages that are not relevant to you.
- Once you have acted on a message or added it to your master list, delete it.
- Skim articles and decide whether you want to keep them for future reference.
- Make a photocopy before passing a magazine on.
- Cut out information, mark relevant sections with red ink, and file in the appropriate place.

DEALING WITH REFERENCE

What should you do with material (both paper and electronic) that you want to read at a later date? One option is to keep it all in a separate “pending” file, dipping in and out of the file as and when you have time for background reading. However, one of the problems with files such as these is that they have a tendency to become unmanageably large, so they need to be cleared out as regularly as possible. You should therefore try to clear the file of any outdated and irrelevant material each time you dip into it.

53

Remove magazine and newspaper articles you wish to keep, then file them for reference.



54

Keep only essential reading on your desk.

READING REFERENCE ▼

Read through relevant magazines and newspapers regularly to source up-to-date reference material. Build up a filing system to deal with this reading matter.

DELEGATING YOUR WORK

It is very daunting to return from time away, for example at meetings or on business travel, to find your desk covered in unprocessed messages and information. If you are often away from your desk, organize someone to filter these for you. The person to whom you delegate this responsibility should be able to sift through your messages and mail, distributing items to staff who can deal with them in your absence. Explain which matters can be handled at once and which are best saved for your return.

Useful articles can be torn from magazines for future reference

Reference and information can be stored in a reading file



KEEPING UP TO DATE

The relevance of information changes as time marches on. As most of today's news is history tomorrow, so our perspective of what is relevant alters over time. Some people believe that what is useless today may come in useful at a later date and consequently tend to hoard all sorts of information. Generally, however, remember that it takes time and space to process written information, so always carefully consider the relevance of any reference material to your work before filing it away.

55 Assess each piece of information for its relevance to current projects.

PROCESSING INFORMATION



WORKING WITH OTHERS

The best-laid plans for managing time are always to some extent in the hands of others. Nobody works entirely alone. An unexpected telephone call can throw a day's plans into chaos. Learn to reconcile other people's time management with your own.

56 Think before you interrupt anyone. Their time is as valuable as yours.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Q** Do I consider others' plans when making my own?
- Q** Do I write too many unnecessary memos?
- Q** Do I organize too many rambling meetings?
- Q** Do I always arrive on time for appointments?
- Q** Do I frequently interrupt other people?

ASSESSING WORK ROLES

The extent to which you compromise your plans for somebody else depends on your relationship with that person. Consider, for example, whether you should call an urgent meeting that includes your boss without discussing it first. Your boss may resent being involved in a meeting without prior consultation – perhaps he or she may have information that alters the agenda or makes the meeting unnecessary. It is essential always to think through the decisions you make when dealing with colleagues at all levels of seniority.

My colleagues spend too much time discussing rather than working

My colleagues do not work long enough hours

My colleagues waste time and money on lunches

My colleagues are not busy enough

My colleagues take too many days off



MAKING FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

If you are guilty of looking at your workmates and making false assumptions about how they manage their time, rethink your attitude. Are they really being unproductive, or do they achieve results from spending time in meetings, discussions, and lunches?

REVIEWING YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

Many people make erroneous judgments about what constitutes good management of time – it is easy to confuse someone seeming to be busy with them working hard and managing their time well. When working with others, analyze their work practices before making assumptions about their productivity. Consider whether you could save time by adapting your work methods to mirror theirs, or vice versa.

ANALYZING MOTIVATION

Everyone is motivated by different aspects of their job. If you think your workmates could make better use of their time, consider whether they are demotivated. This could be because:

- They do not get enough work to do – in which case, redistribute work around the department to ensure everyone has busy schedule;
- They feel frustrated because they are not interested in the work they are doing – discuss a more fulfilling program of work;
- They feel overworked – help them develop their time-management skills or consider whether they can reduce their workload.

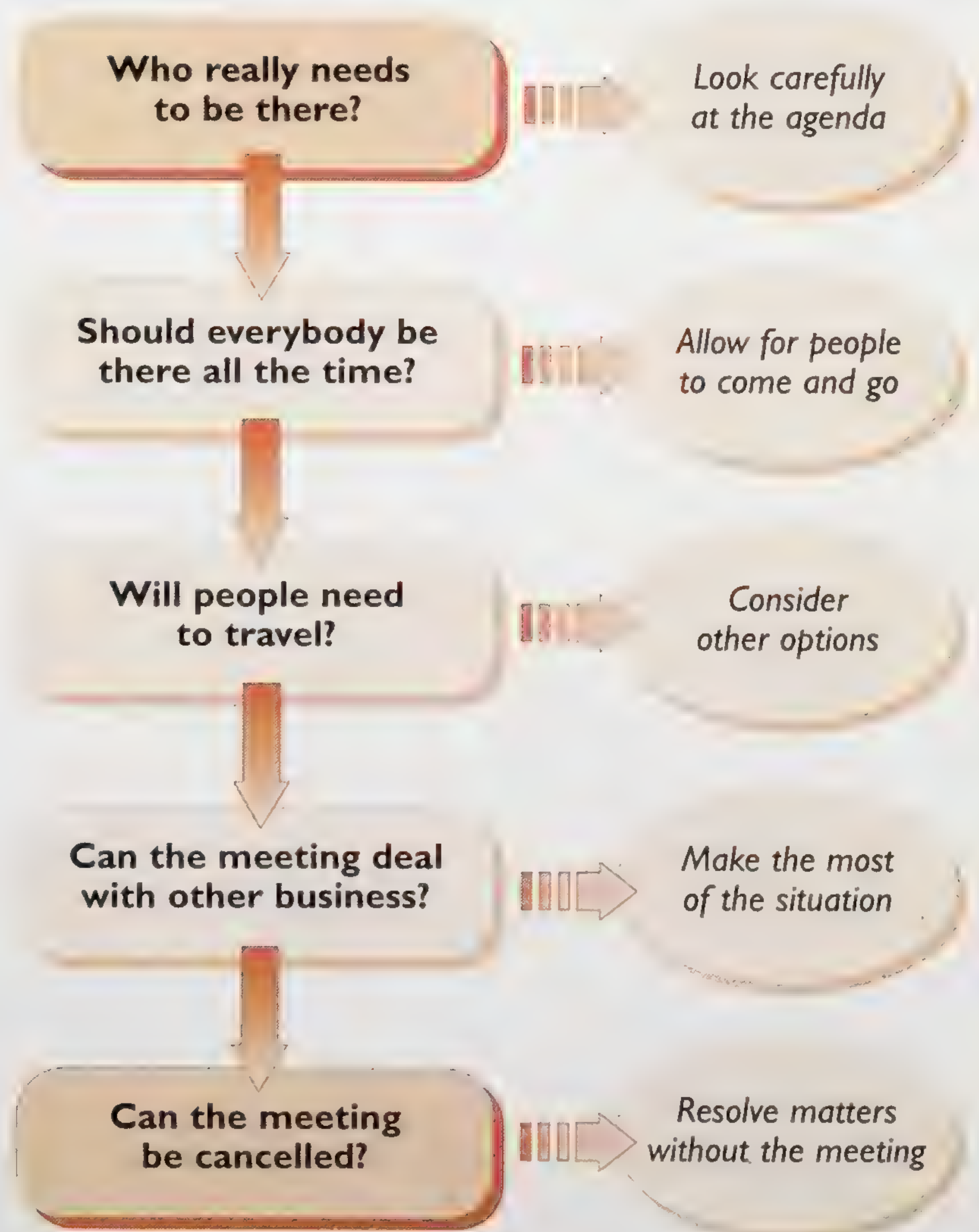
HANDLING MEETINGS

You work with others most often when attending meetings. Organizing a meeting between busy people can be complex and time-consuming. It takes time to set up, prepare an agenda, travel to and from a meeting, and follow up. Remember that meetings take up time that participants could spend on other activities. Always ask yourself if it is really necessary to bring people together. You might be able to save time by not calling a meeting but instead speaking to individuals by phone, for example. If all the participants work for the same organization, it will be to your mutual benefit if time spent in meetings is kept to a minimum.

57 Call a meeting only after considering other options.

58 Do not make assumptions about work colleagues.

THINKING ABOUT MEETINGS



MAKING PHONE CALLS

There is hardly a business in existence that does not depend on the phone and, increasingly, voice mail for rapid and direct communications. Their effective and appropriate use can dramatically improve your efficiency and performance.

60 Avoid distractions when talking on the phone. Focus on what the caller is saying.



59 Take a deep, relaxing breath before you make a phone call.

CHOOSING WHEN TO CALL

Set aside a specific time of day for making phone calls, and list all the calls that you need to make every day. Be clear about the purpose of each call, and draw up a brief agenda for each as if the call were a meeting. Then make sure that you cover all the items on the agenda during the conversation. Prioritize your calls in order of importance to ensure that you concentrate your time and resources on the most important and urgent calls.

KEEPING ON TRACK

Do not let a phone conversation stray too far from your agenda unless there is a good reason, such as dealing with an unexpected problem. Take notes and check off items on your agenda as they are covered. You may find it easier to lead your conversation if you stand up or walk around.

It is easy to lose track of time when speaking to someone whose conversation you enjoy, but try to keep this in check. Assess the purpose of the call – for example, can you be brief, or do you need to spend time building up a rapport or placating an angry customer? As an exercise, use a timer for a week to monitor the length of time you spend on each call. This can be sobering, both because of both the cost of the call itself and the cost in terms of your time.

THINGS TO DO

1. Prepare yourself for a phone conversation as you would for a meeting.
2. Bunch calls together. If a number is busy, try it after completing other calls.
3. Choose an order of priority in which to make your calls.
4. Use a speaker phone so that you can do other work while waiting for an answer.
5. If you use a pager, put aside time to return all your calls.

USING A VOICE-MAIL SYSTEM

Corporate answering machines, also known as voice mail, are becoming commonplace. Some people dislike the impersonal nature of voice mail, but you need to understand how the system works and how to make efficient use of it. It is an ideal tool for arranging internal meetings or eliciting a response from a busy colleague. Avoid bargaining or making deals by means of a seemingly endless series of voice-mail messages, since you need to speak directly to customers or suppliers to gauge reactions and find areas of compromise and agreement.

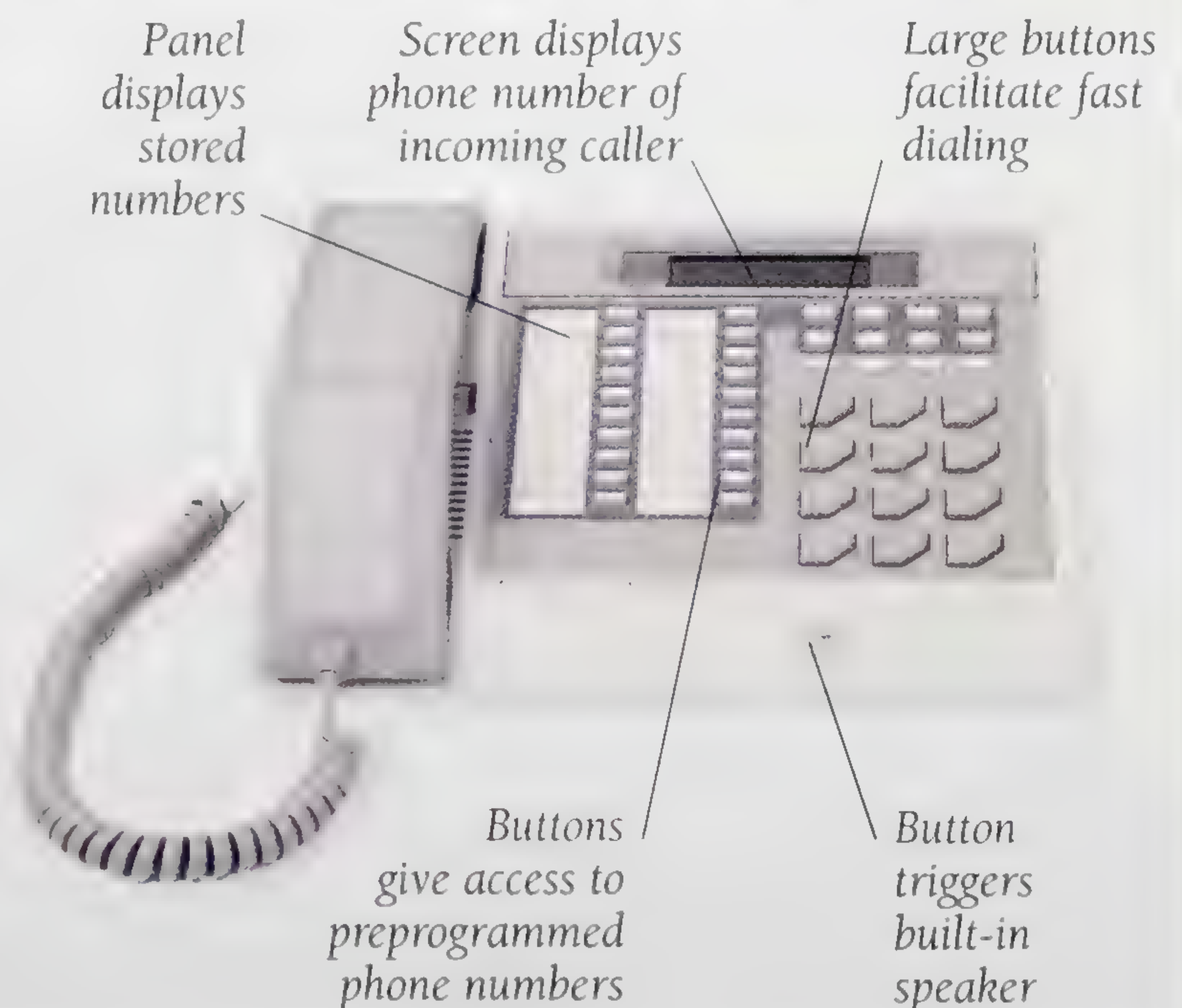
61 When making a phone call, have another project at hand to work on in case you are kept waiting.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do introduce yourself. "This is Brian Smith. I'm calling about..." | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't start a call with "Hello" and expect to be recognized. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do be aware of the amount of time you spend on each call. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't put off urgent, difficult calls to deal with easier and less important ones. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do be clear about the points you want to discuss every time you make a call. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't continue a call if you have a bad line. Hang up and call back. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do leave short, concise messages on answering machines. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't make important calls unless you are fully prepared. |

CHOOSING A TELEPHONE TO SUIT YOUR NEEDS

Telephones now have a tremendous range of optional extras; look into the choices to see whether they can be used to help you work any more efficiently. Facilities available include call forwarding, speed-dialing, desk speakers, conference lines, and small screens that show an incoming caller's number and name before you pick up the receiver. There is no point, however, in having a host of buttons and features that you do not use. Choose a telephone system with features that you actually do need.



TAKING PHONE CALLS

Receiving phone calls is very different from making calls. Incoming calls can take you by surprise and interrupt you when you are unprepared. Develop techniques to reduce the time wasted and enable you to deal with callers when you choose to do so.

62 Tell people when they can call you, and note the time in your diary.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- It is easy to decide if a person should call back by making your first question "How long is this conversation likely to take?"
- People you would like to call back should be asked to do so at a time that is convenient to you.
- It is not impolite to take an easy way out. "Is this an inconvenient time?" invites the answer "Yes."
- A direct line enables you to give your number to those you want to reach you at once; you can divert other calls.

MAKING TIME FOR CALLS

Phone callers have the upper hand in deciding when they want to make a call, but modern technology is shifting the balance of power between caller and called. To some extent you can now dictate the time when you receive calls, enabling you to arrange your working day as you prefer. If you have an answering machine or voice-mail system, leave a short message on it saying when you will be in your office and that callers should call back at that time. If you have a secretary, route all your calls via him or her, with instructions regarding to whom you wish to speak and when it would be most convenient.

SIGNALING THE END OF A PHONE CALL

It can be difficult to end a phone conversation initiated by somebody else, but do not assume that it is up to them to close. If you are too busy to talk, tell the caller just that, and explain your reasons politely. Try one of the following phrases:

“Is there anything else we need to discuss before I go?”

“I have a call on my other line. Is it okay to call you back another time?”

“Perhaps we can discuss this further next time we speak.”

“I must go. My boss is signaling to me to join her from the other end of the room.”

DEALING WITH COLD CALLERS

If you have secretarial staff, brief them not to transfer cold callers through to you. If a persistent caller does succeed in getting through, politely but firmly inform him or her that you are not interested in what they are offering. Remember that, however annoying it may be to have interruptions from cold callers, they are only doing their job, and you should always treat them courteously.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- ✓ Do be polite.
- ✓ Do keep an open mind. Cold callers may have information that is useful to you.
- ✓ Do suggest someone who may be interested in the product or proposal being offered.
- ✓ Do get a phone that shows a caller's number as they call. If you do not know the number, you need not take the call.
- ✗ Don't ask cold callers to call back. They will, and it may be at a less convenient time.
- ✗ Don't say you will call back if you have no intention of doing so.
- ✗ Don't ask a caller to send details unless you are genuinely interested.
- ✗ Don't answer questions with long rambling sentences. Keep to the point.

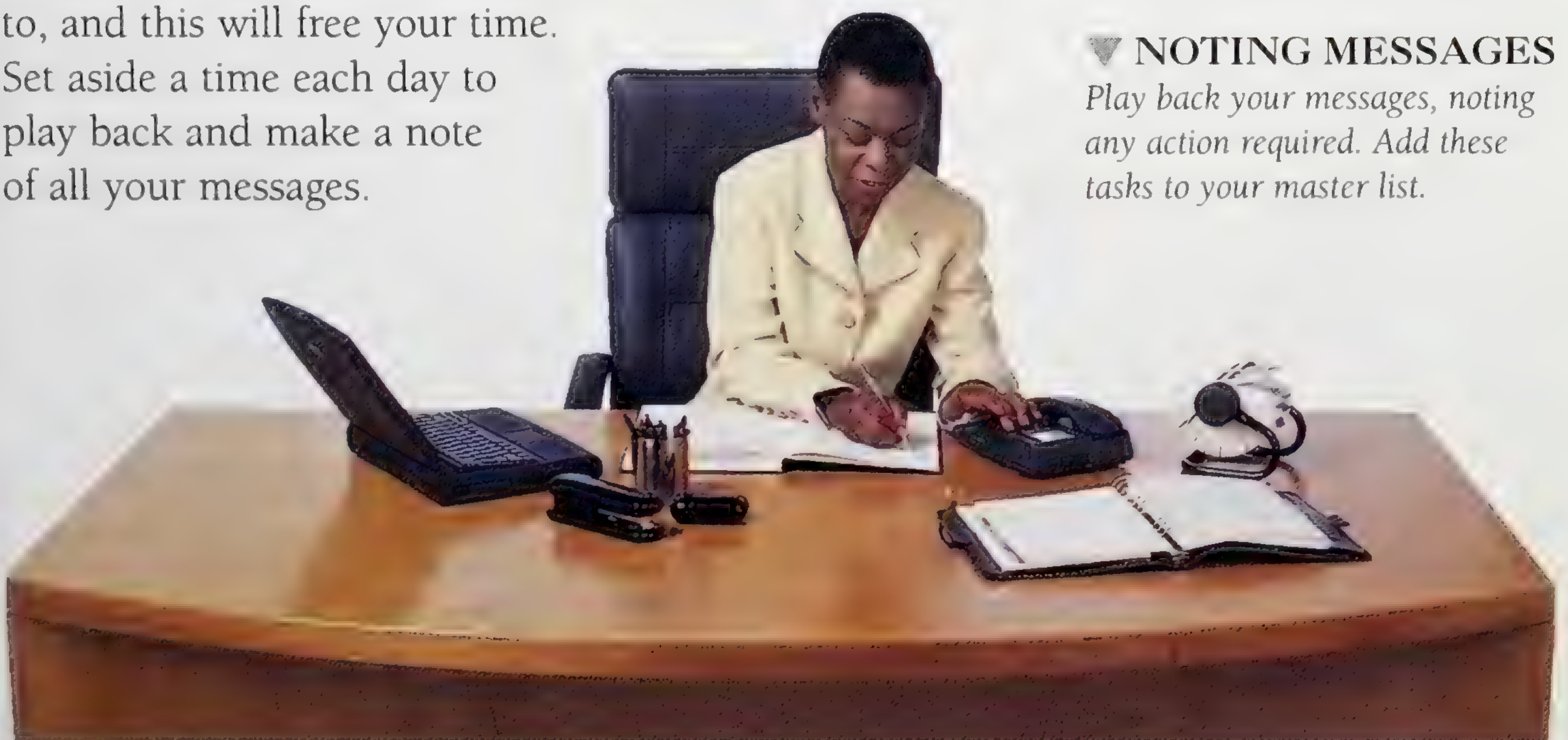
RECORDING MESSAGES

Use a recorded message on your answering machine or voice-mail system to influence the replies you receive. A crisp, brief message invites a crisp, brief reply. If your machine allows you to limit the lengths of incoming messages, use this feature to force callers to leave short messages. Messages will then take you less time to listen to, and this will free your time. Set aside a time each day to play back and make a note of all your messages.

63 Reroute your calls when you want to avoid interruptions.

▼ NOTING MESSAGES

Play back your messages, noting any action required. Add these tasks to your master list.



READING AND WRITING

Many people spend a significant proportion of their working lives reading and absorbing information, as well as providing it in the form of memos, letters, and reports. Learn how to cope with these well, and you will save a great deal of time.

65 Underline key phrases in reports you need to read.

66 Skim the headlines in your daily newspaper.

64 Never delay dealing with any written material – it will just mount up.

LEARNING TO SKIM

Everybody wastes time reading sentences that link the important points made in text. Learn to skim from paragraph to paragraph, identifying the key words in each. Effective skimming requires practice. Start with a piece of text and read every word. As you go along, underline one key word in each paragraph, then go back over the text and see if you can reconstruct the sense from the key words you have chosen. Repeat on new pieces of text until eventually you can identify key words quickly and easily.

ASSESSING MATERIAL

When reading reports and articles, try to get an overview of their contents first. Read any introduction or summary, and take time to look at the list of contents. If you have a long report to read, start by glancing through it from beginning to end, noting the headings and the lengths of different sections. When you read the report in full – either immediately or later on – you will then find you have a good idea of its content and structure, helping you read it quickly and efficiently. The same also applies to newspapers and magazines. If you do not have enough time to read your daily paper, make a mental note of the main headlines and skim the digest section.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- The main purpose when reading is to understand the material.
- Not everything can be understood fully after one read. It takes time to absorb a long list of points, so relevant documents must always be read carefully.
- Skimming is generally suitable for documents such as memos, not for more detailed material.
- Readers need to be led through a report, so directional signposts should be included.
- A document should always be written with the reader in mind.

COPING WITH WRITER'S BLOCK

If you have trouble starting to write, vary your approach until you find the system that works for you. A report does not need to be written in its final order, and may be less daunting if you divide it into small sections.

Introductions and conclusions can be difficult, so try starting wherever inspiration strikes – the important thing is to get something down in writing from which to work. It is often easiest to “top and tail” a report after writing the main text.

FACING A BLANK SCREEN

Even experienced writers are sometimes at a loss for words. Instead of staring blankly at a screen, try writing the first thing that comes into your head – you may find that this unblocks your thoughts and allows your ideas to flow more freely.

DO'S AND DON'TS

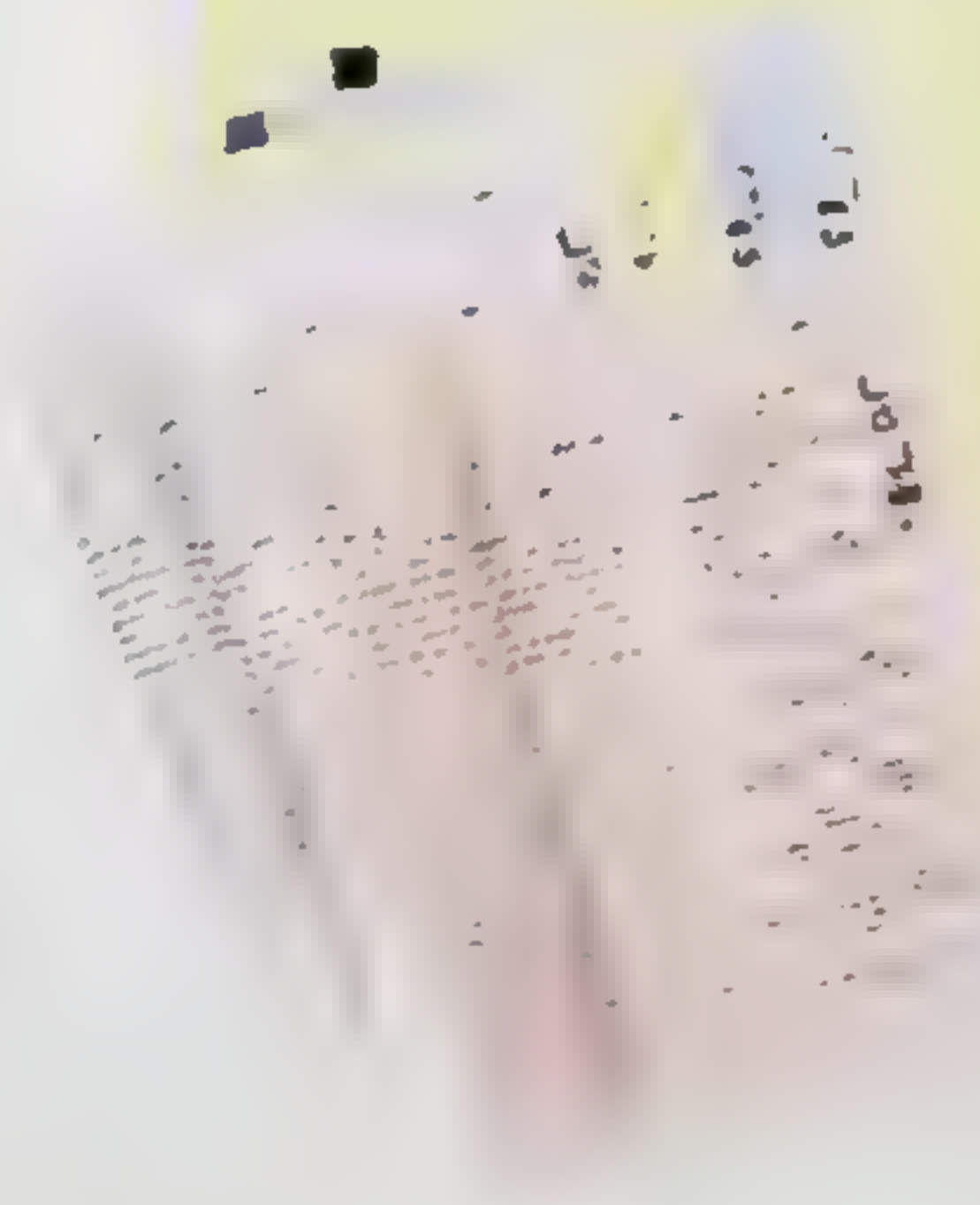
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do prepare an outline before you write. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't stare at a blank computer screen – write anything. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do read your work as if it is new to you. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't make your text too complex or too simple for your reader. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do keep in mind the point you are making while you write, and use clear language. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't pad your work with irrelevant facts. |



REDUCING PAPERWORK

To cut down on the amount of writing you need to do, learn to deal effectively with incoming correspondence such as memos and faxes. Your response may merit a lengthy reply, but it may be more appropriate to add a quick, handwritten note on the original before passing it on; this is much quicker and saves on paper. Delegate the opening of your mail to your assistant or a junior member of your team. Brief them about what they can deal with themselves and how to prioritize items for your attention. This way you can reduce the volume of paper that you handle yourself.

- 67** Keep essential reference material separate from your other documents and papers.



USING TECHNOLOGY

Few people today can make effective use of their time if they do not understand the basics of information technology (IT) – the convergence of telecommunications and computing. IT puts libraries in our offices and a postal service at our beck and call.

69 Consider carefully your computing requirements.

68 Clear unwanted documents from your computer once a month.

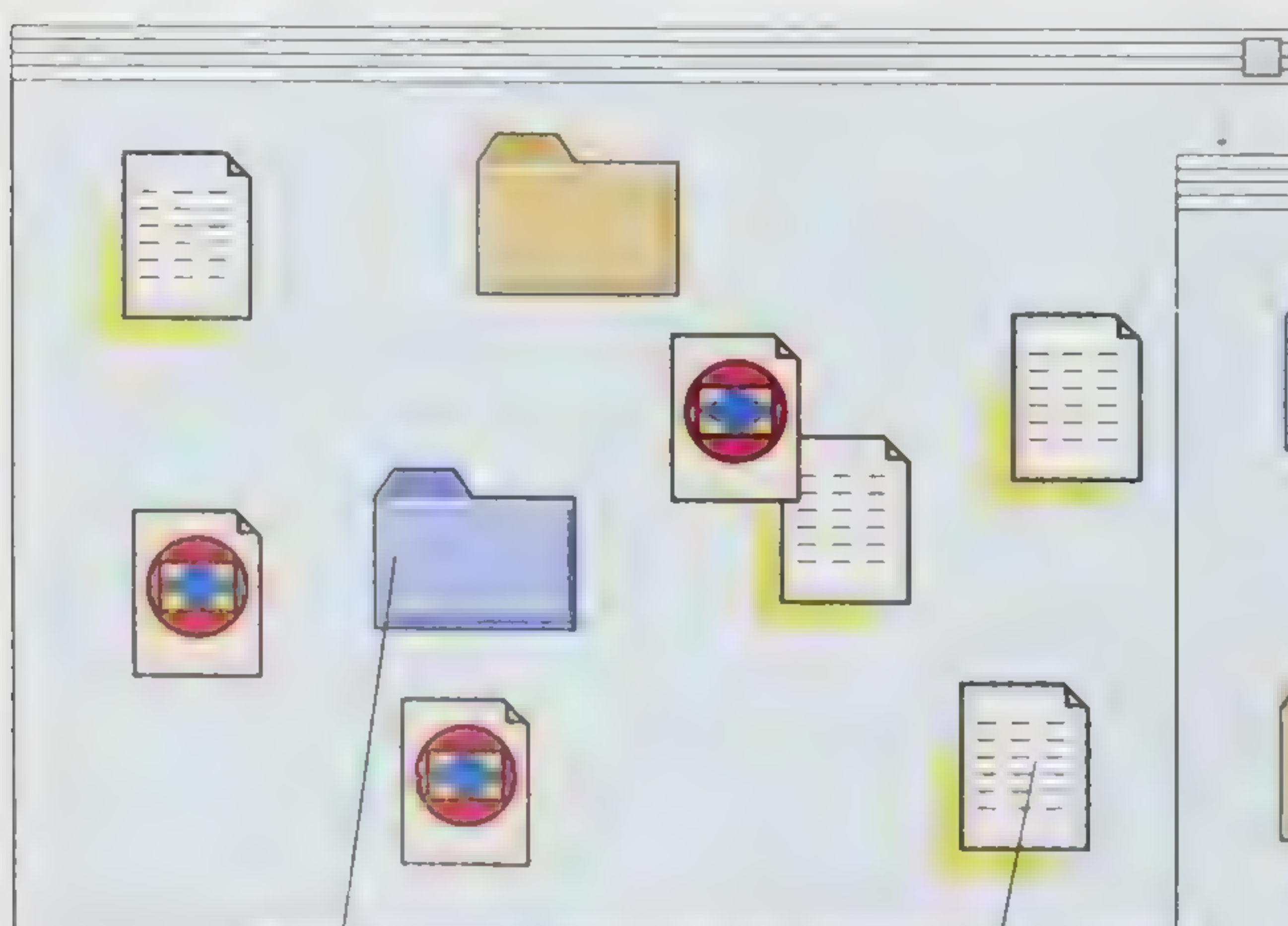
▼ STORING INFORMATION

Keep your documents and folders well organized. If you do not, the desktop will become a mess of icons labeled with names that no longer mean anything to you. Take half an hour each month to go through your computer, keeping folders up to date and deleting things you no longer need.

FILING ON A COMPUTER

Design a system for storing information along the same lines as a filing system for paperwork. Create a method of classification that suits your business, and label your documents clearly and logically. Keep your data in documents stored in folders on a hard disk (the computer's memory) or on removable floppy disks (the equivalent of a series of filing cabinets). Electronic data can be corrupted by magnetic fields, and an electricity surge can result in the loss of data on a hard or floppy disk, so make a backup copy of important material on a separate disk and label it clearly.

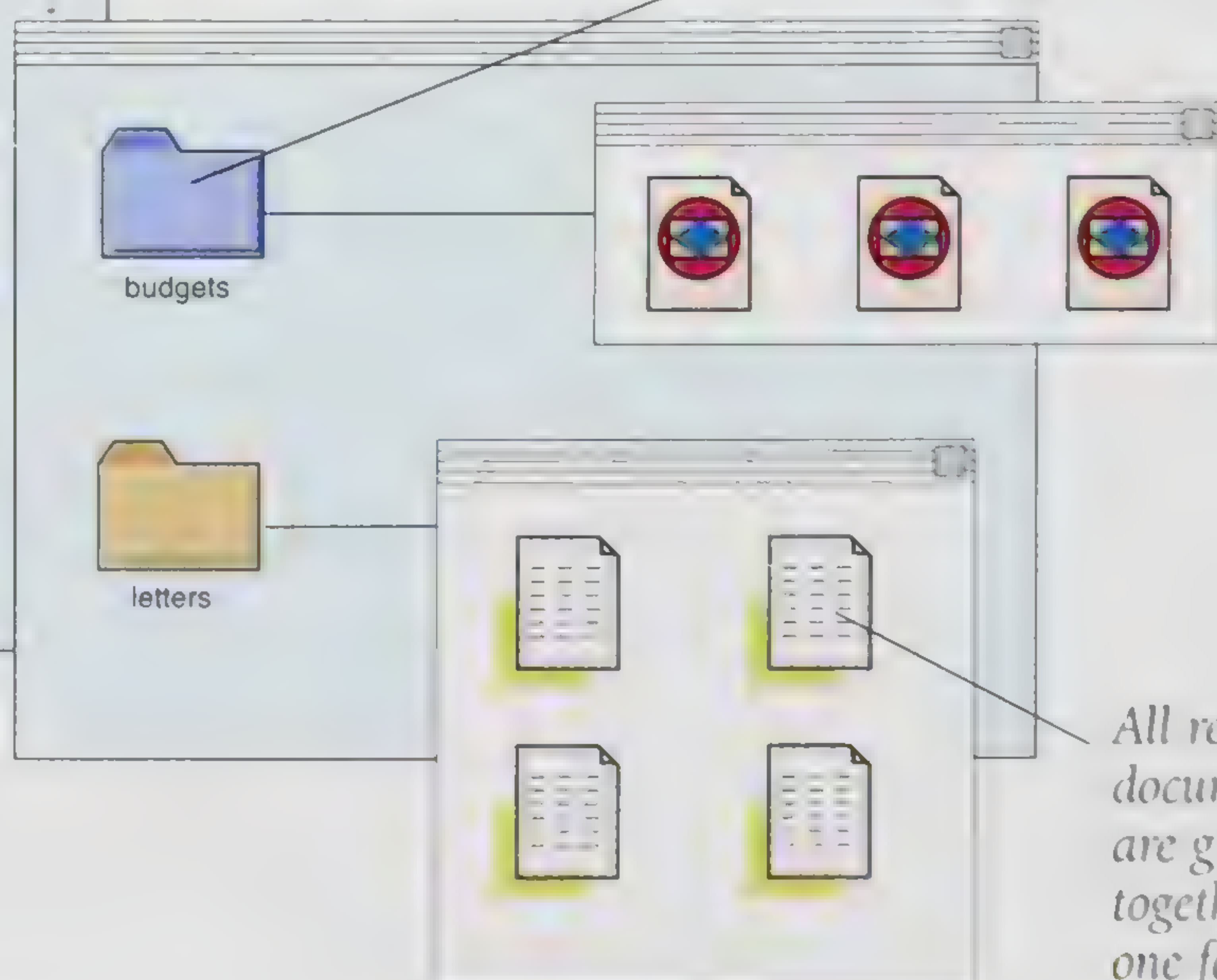
BEFORE FILING



Folder is unlabeled

Randomly located document can accidentally be deleted

AFTER FILING



Folder is labeled clearly

All related documents are grouped together in one folder

USING E-MAIL

There are two types of e-mail system: intranets within companies, used mainly to relay messages between colleagues, and Internet-based e-mail, which allows for international communication. E-mail is easy to use and can be a channel for more than just simple messages. You can send any document on a computer as an attachment to an e-mail, so you will not need to import or retype as long as the recipient has the right software to read it. Because of its immediacy, e-mail is an informal medium, and strict rules of grammar and formal written language tend not to be used. But remember that confidentiality is not guaranteed.

70 Keep your e-mail messages short, and address them accurately.

SEARCHING ON THE INTERNET

The Internet has a number of search engines – systems that enable you to search for information speedily. To ensure a successful search, carefully choose the keywords for which you ask the search engine to look. If you do not, you will be given an unmanageable number of references, many of which will be irrelevant. If your choice is too narrow, the search engine may not find anything.

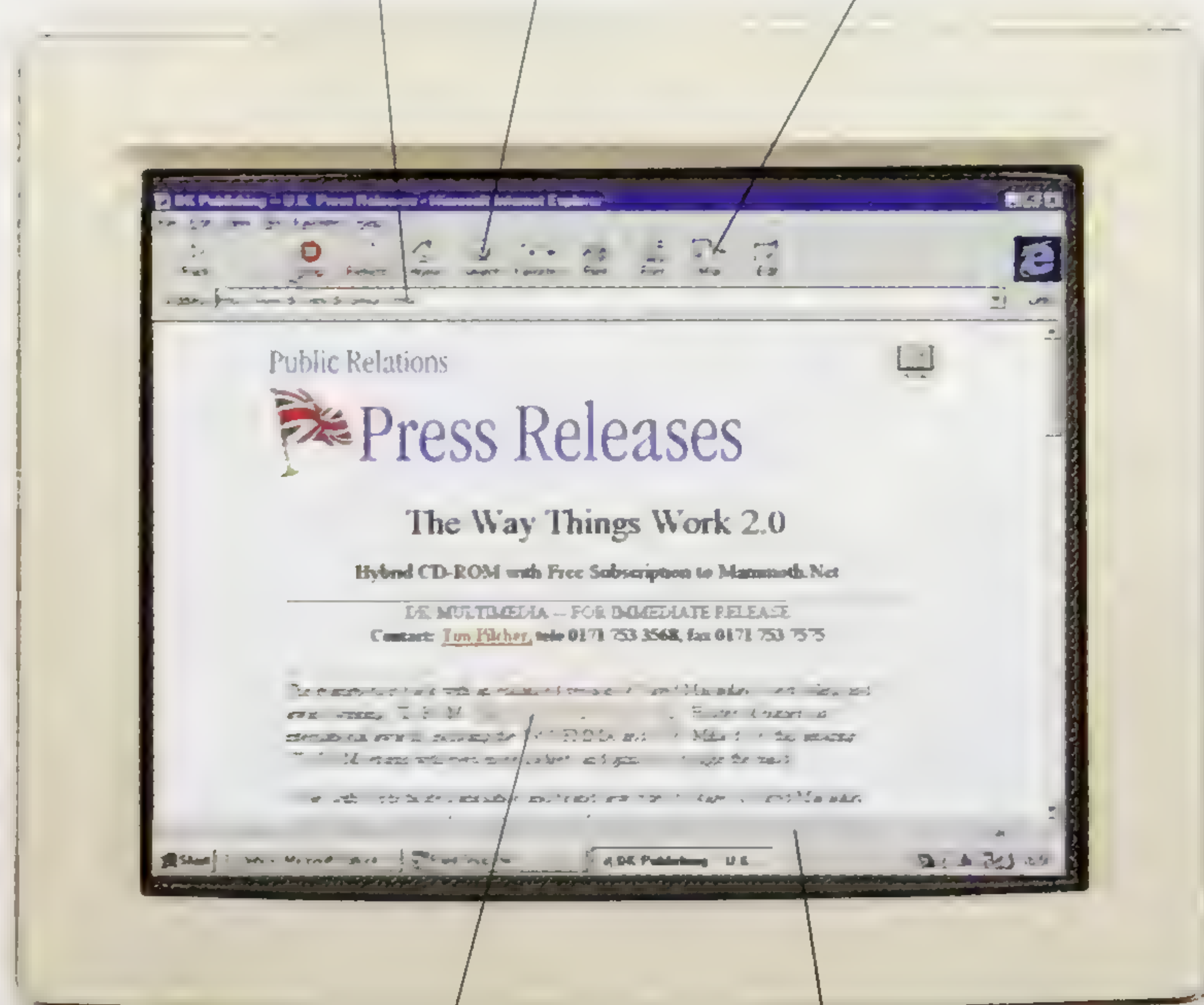
USING A ► WEB-SITE PAGE

In Internet language, a Web page is what you see on a computer screen. A Web site may be elaborate and contain many pages and will usually provide links to many other related sites.

Internet address
of Web-site page
currently accessed

Icon for
searching
Internet

Icon for
accessing
e-mail service



Underlined keywords
indicating links
with other pages

Status bar
indicating page
downloading time

HOLDING MEETINGS

Meetings consume a large proportion of the average working week. Typically, a manager spends up to half of each week in meetings. Making sure that meetings run smoothly and achieve their purpose is an essential ingredient of time management.

71 Encourage people to express views, even if they are contrary to yours.

72 Keep meetings short by listening rather than talking.

MEETING ONE TO ONE

One-to-one meetings are more flexible than large, formal gatherings, and their duration is more easily controlled. Nevertheless, you need to achieve a delicate balance between cutting a meeting too short, leaving the other person feeling frustrated, and allowing it to go on so long that both parties feel their time is being wasted.

ASSESSING STAFF

Staff assessments are a sensitive example of one-to-one meetings. They should be of fixed duration and free from interruption to allow frank communication.



TIMING SMALL MEETINGS

Some one-to-one meetings have a very specific purpose, such as recruitment or staff assessment, and in these cases there usually tends to be a well-understood format and duration. Less formal one-to-one meetings tend to be either short and focused, in response to a particular situation (such as a reprimand), or more general and of indefinite duration. In these latter cases, avoid unnecessary time-wasting for both parties by deciding informally on an agenda and time frame for the meeting beforehand. Be disciplined in adhering to it. This way, both parties' expectations of the meeting's purpose will be clarified, minimizing the need to spend time resolving misunderstandings afterward.

73 Ask a colleague to interrupt "urgently" if a routine meeting lasts over an hour.

▼ REPRIMANDING STAFF

Reprimands should be brief, without anger, and as close as possible to the offending event; try to ensure that the issue is dealt with and resolved in a single meeting. Use assertive body language to emphasize and reinforce your message.

Subordinate's head is tilted downward, but he maintains eye contact with manager

Manager assumes dominant position by standing and leaning across desk



PLANNING LARGE MEETINGS

Make sure that everybody attending a meeting knows its purpose and their roles in advance. Circulate an agenda well beforehand to tell participants which subjects are to be discussed. This will allow them to prepare any necessary information and gain an idea of the duration of the meeting. It will be easier for the chairperson to control time-wasting tactics if everybody is aware that the agenda must be covered within the set time limit. Your agenda will also help define the amount of time allocated to individual items.

74 Allocate a specific amount of time to each subject on an agenda.

75 Encourage people to attend only the parts of a meeting that concern them.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Different cultures view meetings in different ways, so the handling of a meeting depends to some extent on the nationalities of those present. The Japanese consider it an insult if you appear alone at a meeting – they honor their hosts by appearing in numbers. In Arab countries, it is not usual to be told how long a meeting will last. It will finish when all the guests are ready to leave.

PREPARING AN AGENDA

The order in which items appear on an agenda can have a powerful effect on a meeting's timing. Avoid heading an agenda with a contentious subject, since the participants in the meeting may spend too much time discussing it instead of moving on to the next item. Instead, begin with routine and straightforward business, which offers easy decisions. This gives the meeting a feeling of achievement and the impetus to progress rapidly.

AVOIDING TIME-WASTING

Time-wasting in meetings costs more than just the participants' time; the monetary cost of a meeting may be considerable when the combined salaries of those present are taken into account. So it is imperative that time is not lost by people attending unnecessary meetings, by meetings being disrupted, or by meetings failing to achieve their objectives. Do not tolerate tactics such as lengthy, irrelevant speeches by fellow participants, or the endless revising of points. If you are the chairperson, it will be your role to recognize such tactics and ensure that the meeting is kept moving.

KEEPING TO SCHEDULE

Meetings should start punctually: begin without latecomers, and do not waste time recapping for them when they arrive. Keep a careful track of time throughout a meeting to ensure the agenda is covered in the allotted time. In general, defer overrunning items until the end of the meeting so that other items can be dealt with on schedule.

76 Remind everyone what was agreed at a meeting in a followup memo.

KEEPING A MEETING ON COURSE

ON COURSE

OFF COURSE

Everyone on time

Start the meeting

Discussion recapped for late arrivals

Everyone given a chance to speak

Allow points of view to be expressed

Random interruptions allowed

Compromises accepted

Hold discussion

Tempers allowed to fray

Conclusions kept brief and succinct

Draw conclusions

Already-discussed points repeated

Action attainable

Decide on action

Deadlines not set

Followed up with written minutes

Summarize and close meeting

Decisions disagreed on



TRAVELING FOR WORK

With the development of the global marketplace, a growing number of people are finding that travel is an integral part of their job. Organizing business trips effectively is now an essential part of time management for many managers.

77 Before traveling, assess whether the trip is necessary and cost-effective.

78 If possible, fit everything you need to take into one small piece of hand luggage.



ASSESSING NEED

Before making plans to travel, ask yourself a number of questions about the trip. Am I making the best use of my time by going on this trip? Will a phone call or letter suffice instead? Can I send someone else? Can I persuade the people I need to see to come to me? Can I meet them half way? If the answer to any of these is yes, seriously question the time-effectiveness of your trip.

PACKING EFFICIENTLY

Effective packing requires you to make an accurate assessment of your needs based on the duration of your trip. For a short trip, take just enough clothing and accessories with you to cover the number of days you anticipate being away. This way you do not need to spend money on laundry services. However, if you are going to be away for more than a few days, it may be better to take only one or two changes of clothes and have them cleaned on the trip, rather than burdening yourself with heavy suitcases.

79 Take work to do in an airport lounge in case of delays.

Diary contains detailed travel itinerary

Files necessary for trip

PACKING A BRIEFCASE

Be selective about what you take. Assess which documents and equipment you will need for any meetings you have planned and for staying in touch with your office.

Background material

Mobile phone cases contact with office



MANAGING YOUR TRAVEL TIME

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

- Carefully plan your route and itinerary.
- Combine numerous visits within the same country or region if possible.
- Draw up a precise daily schedule. Leave a copy with colleagues at the office so that you can be contacted if necessary.
- Gather together all the documents you will need for your meetings while you are away.
- Always confirm arrangements before you set out in case a meeting needs to be rescheduled or is no longer necessary.
- Prepare a permanent general file containing essential information that you can use each time you visit a particular area.
- Reserve seats in advance when traveling by train so that you can avoid lines and arrive at the station just before the train departs.

WHILE YOU ARE AWAY

- Keep in touch with your office so that you can update them on your progress and keep abreast of any new developments that will affect your plans.
- Use a recorder for memos or notes, or use a laptop for e-mails or other work that can be done on-screen.
- Use your own alarm clock as a backup in case the wakeup-call service in your hotel proves to be unreliable.
- At your destination, travel at off-peak times if possible; it is less stressful – and may be quicker – than battling through the rush-hour commuters.
- Combine meals with business meetings to save time and create a more informal and congenial working atmosphere.

COPING WITH JET LAG

Your daily life is governed by an internal body clock that regulates sleep patterns. Jet lag occurs when you travel through different time zones and disrupt this clock. If you are traveling to a time zone with a 2- or 3- hour difference from your own, try going to bed when it is time to sleep at your destination on the day before you travel. This allows your body to adopt the new sleep pattern. For places with a larger time difference, ensure you are well rested before you travel and allow rest time upon arrival.

80 Set your watch to the local time at your destination.

TRAVEL LIGHT

Today's bags and suitcases are better designed and more ergonomic than ever before. Use a bag with wheels to save lifting a heavy case. Carry a suit carrier and small wheeled bag onto a plane as hand luggage to save time on arrival at your destination.

Suit carrier

Hard-cased wheeled bag



STAYING IN TOUCH

While it is important to work out how you are going to keep in touch with your office when traveling, try to be realistic about it. There are many methods of communication you can use, with varying levels of complexity. Choose the method best suited to your needs. In some situations, your absence from work may cause practical difficulties. For example, your signature may be required to validate important documents. In such circumstances, it may be appropriate to use an overnight courier to get the documents to you and to take them back to the office.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- A fax is faster than a mailed letter and often cheaper.
- Modems can be attached to portable computers, enabling you to send faxes or e-mail.
- Mobile telephones do not work in all parts of some countries.
- International call costs can vary, so options such as calling cards and pay phones should always be checked before any telephone calls are made from overseas.

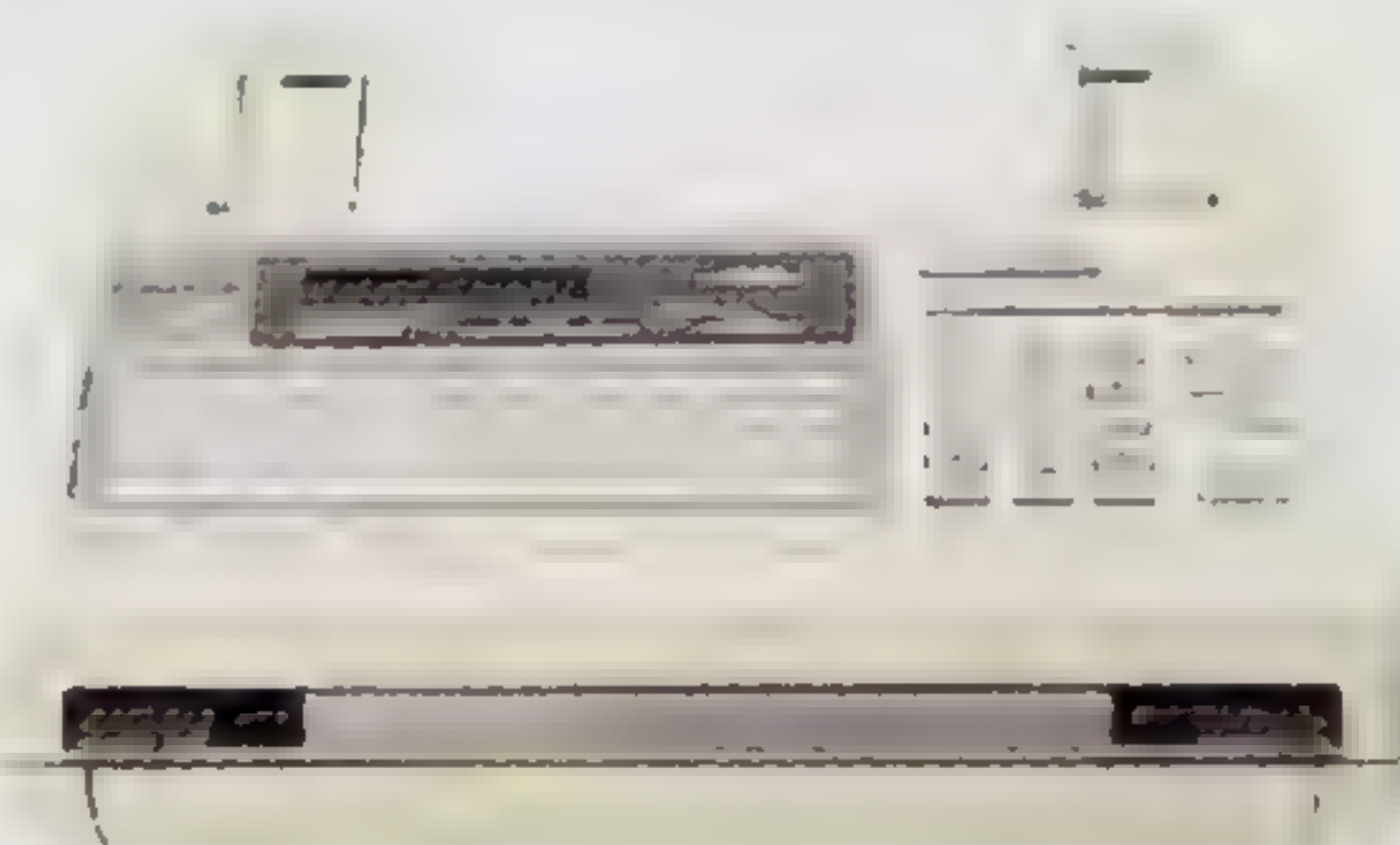
COMMUNICATING WHILE TRAVELING

Communicating with colleagues at your office while on a business trip is now more convenient and reliable than ever. Use any one of the following methods according to your location and the type of communication you want to send or receive.



▲ TELEPHONE

Leave a contact number with your office. Note that most hotels charge large premiums to use the phones in the rooms.



▲ FAX MACHINE

Send messages by fax if you want a fast reply. Some hotels have machines in their rooms or a central fax in reception.

MOBILE ► PHONE

Most mobile phones now offer overseas communications. They are useful in areas where there are no public telephones.



◀ E-MAIL

Send documents and communications that need instant attention by e-mail. To access e-mail you will need a computer set up with a modem link.



◀ MAIL

Use guaranteed delivery services for sending original documents or those that require a signature. Air mail can be used for less urgent items.

KEEPING ON TOP OF WORK

Before you travel, draw up a schedule that utilizes your time to the optimum; this will minimize the time you are away and reduce the cost of the trip. Many people think that they can carry on with their normal job while on a business trip, but this is not possible in the majority of cases – nor is it always necessary. Ensure that your business trip has a specific purpose, and keep free time to a minimum. Use any time you have available to concentrate on the purpose of your trip.

82 Find out whether you need adapters for your electrical equipment abroad.

81 Check how much your hotel charges for phone calls before making any.

UPDATING YOUR NOTES

Most of your time on business trips will be spent attending meetings; the longer the trip, the more meetings you will attend. It is crucial to update your notes every day; otherwise, all your meetings will have merged into each other by the time you return to your office, and you will not be able to recall who agreed to what and when. Allow time each day to write up the day's meetings, noting any decisions made and action to be taken.



WORKING IN YOUR ROOM

Take advantage of the peace and quiet of a hotel room to write up the day's events and prepare for the next day's meetings. Use a laptop computer to record the proceedings and results of your meetings and to correspond with your office. As an alternative, have the details of your meetings typed up and sent back to your office electronically by hotel business center staff.

SCHEDULING TIME OFF

Managing your time successfully involves more than just organizing your workload. Work will suffer if you do not schedule regular breaks to recharge your batteries. Try to make time for family and friends, hobbies, and leisure activities.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Taking time off should not make you feel guilty. It will help you be more effective in your work.
- Even a few minutes' break from work can be rejuvenating.
- A working vacation is a complete contradiction in terms.
- Exercise helps reduce stress and can provide a useful break from work if your workplace has showers and changing facilities.
- Vacations and time off work should be regarded as a good exercise in delegation.

TAKING DAILY BREAKS

Some business leaders include a regular period in their day when they briefly take time off. Similar to the siesta, it is often taken after lunch. Their doors are closed to interruptions, allowing them to take a short period of semisleep (only about 10 minutes), which has a recuperative effect on the body. Schedule a set time each day to switch off; pick a quiet period that fits in with your personal energy rhythm and work obligations. With practice, you will be able to reduce this rest time.

It can be difficult to find a suitable place to take such a break. Open-plan offices lack privacy and are noisy, making it difficult to relax. Try to find a vacant room or office away from all disturbances.

83 Take two or three short vacations each year instead of one long one.



84 Schedule regular time off to pursue your hobbies and leisure interests.

◀ TAKING TIME FOR YOURSELF

Do not rush straight back to work after a hectic meeting – take a break in a café or go for a walk. Time out will allow you to clear your head and restore your energy.

RECHARGING BATTERIES

To recharge your batteries you must lead a well-balanced life and take time off. Spend this time with family and friends, exercise regularly, eat properly, learn new things, and take vacations. If you do not have school-age children, plan breaks to coincide with quiet periods at work. Off-season vacations can also provide relaxation, since destinations are less crowded.



GETTING AWAY

A change of scenery can provide a breathing space from work and help you relax. Vacationing with your family or friends allows you to take a break from the pressures of your daily routine. Even a short break away can be beneficial.

PLANNING AHEAD

Good time management means planning ahead. Scheduling vacations in advance allows you to organize your workload around your breaks. At the start of each year, take the time and effort to organize your diary. Work out when you are likely to be busy and when your workload will be lightest. Look ahead at the year as a whole, and plan your vacations accordingly. Ask everybody in your office to do the same with their own schedules, and you will soon be able to see if any conflicts of time are going to arise.

85 Aim to experience something new every day.

✓ ORGANIZING TIME OFF

Estimate the time needed to complete your work commitments over the year, and block it out on a wall chart. You will then be able to assess the best times to take vacations.

[illegible]

Time allocated for regular work events

Time allocated to deal with heavy workload

Time allocated for breaks
due to light workload

MANAGING THE TIME OF OTHERS

To make the best use of your time, you also need to manage that of your staff, colleagues, and seniors. Learn to delegate well, share tasks, and manage upward as well as down.

COMMUNICATING WELL

To manage others so that you all make the best use of available time, you first need to master the art of communication. This is not just a matter of deciding what your message is; it is also about deciding how to communicate that message.

86 Maintain high expectations, and people will live up to them.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Hierarchy is deeply embedded in the cultures of most Eastern countries, and age still matters. If you are a young manager, do not expect to be listened to in China, for instance. Deference will be awarded to a consultant with gray hair, even if you both give exactly the same message.

SPREADING INFORMATION

Today, companies are evolving in a way that makes it easier for the people within them to communicate with each other. A gradual cultural change has meant that organizations are more open. You can use this new openness to save time, for example by spreading information verbally rather than writing a memo. Spoken communication has the added advantage of being two-way, encouraging the involvement of staff and allowing refinement of detail. But any important points covered verbally should also be noted in writing to minimize later uncertainties.

REVISING METHODS

Intranets and e-mail systems allow rapid, widespread dissemination of information. They can also make working at home without losing touch with colleagues a more practical and attractive option than it used to be. However, beware of information overload: the volume of data may make what is effectively junk e-mail seem more important than it is, and the ease of electronic communication can make it tempting to send messages that are not strictly necessary. Remember, too, that as organizations become less hierarchical and lines of communication open out, recipients may lack necessary background information, so always be clear and precise to avoid time-wasting misunderstandings.

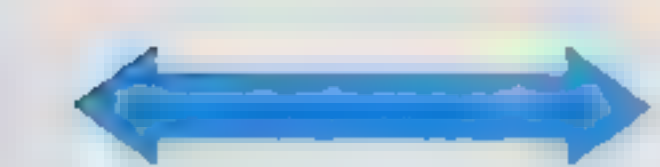
ANALYZING INFORMATION FLOW

Certain communication lines in any organization are better developed than others. For instance, sales staff spend more time in contact with the production department than with colleagues in administration.

KEY



Communicates frequently



Communicates occasionally



Communicates rarely


87

Persuade others of your case using facts, not emotions.

88

Take an interest in what others are trying to achieve.

89

Hearing is not the same as listening. Learn to listen.

DELEGATING EFFECTIVELY

One of the keys to effective management is delegating work to others – no one can do everything for themselves. Learn to delegate aspects of your work properly, and you will have time to complete the most important elements of your job successfully.

91 Reserve some time for the tasks that you alone can do.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- When you delegate, you are not delegating the right to perform an action, you are delegating the right to make decisions.
- It is important to be flexible; the person to whom you delegate may have a better and faster way of completing a job than you.
- A brief can be misinterpreted, so it is a good idea to ask for it to be repeated back to you.
- Overall responsibility for a delegated task remains with you.
- It is helpful to others if you can provide constructive feedback on their performance.
- Too much criticism is far more harmful than too much praise.

90 Make sure you define objectives clearly when you delegate a task.

LEARNING TO DELEGATE

The process of delegation consists of the decision to delegate, the briefing, and the followup. At each of these points, anticipate the potential problems.

- The decision: persuade yourself to delegate. You will not benefit if you work to the assumption that it takes longer to teach somebody else to do a job than to do it yourself. Delegation has its own rewards – once someone has learned a particular task, they will be able to do it in the future without repeated briefings. However, be sure to delegate each job to a person with the appropriate skills and knowledge.
- The briefing: make sure that the person to whom you are delegating clearly understands the brief – what you want them to do and by when. Offer ongoing support and guidance.
- The followup: during the course of the project, check the standard of work produced. Provide positive feedback, but beware of overdoing it – there is a narrow line between helpful supervision and debilitating interference.

92 Keep a checklist to help you monitor the progress of tasks that you have delegated to others.

REINFORCING A BRIEF

In addition to providing a clear brief when delegating, you must provide all the information necessary for someone to complete the task successfully. To avoid any misinterpretation of the facts, take time to explain exactly what you expect and how the project fits into your overall plan. Discuss any difficulties that may occur and how they could be tackled, and answer queries as they arise during completion of the task.

93 Reward good work generously, and chastise in moderation.

94 Set precise and realistic deadlines for tasks that you delegate.

STRENGTHENING RESPONSIBILITY

Delegation does not mean handing over control of a project, but handing over responsibility for certain tasks. Encourage individuals to work using their own methods, providing they stick to the brief. This allows you to exploit their specialized knowledge or to provide them with an opportunity to develop a new area of expertise. One of the common contentions arising out of delegation is conflict over responsibility, so it is vital to define exactly what the delegate is responsible for.

DELEGATING CHOICES



MANAGING COLLEAGUES

One of the most difficult things to get right is managing interruptions from colleagues. Either you become too available to each other, in which case you lose control of your time, or you are too distant and fail to take advantage of each other's abilities.

95 Try not to allow colleagues to distract you with unimportant issues.

96 Hold meetings in colleagues' offices, so you can leave when necessary.

WORKING TOGETHER

Traditional corporate hierarchies are gradually being flattened, and more tasks are now being assigned to teams designed and brought together for single projects. This means that you need to be able to work side by side with a variety of individuals and find ways of agreeing with them about work priorities and time management.

SHARING YOUR TIME-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

TASKS	WAYS TO SHARE SKILLS
PRIORITIZING WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Talk through the principles of dividing work into A-, B-, and C-tasks and allocating a set number of each to do every day.● Use examples from your colleagues' workload.
USING DIARIES AND PLANNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ask your colleagues to keep a time log, then review and analyze it with them to discover their various working patterns.● Help your colleagues set up an appropriate planning system.
FILTERING INFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Encourage your colleagues to assess every item of information they receive to decide what action is required.● Provide hints on faster reading based on your own experience.
DELEGATING AND FOLLOWING UP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Discuss specific, related examples from the past to determine the best course of action in this instance.● Be prepared to review any new systems that are set up.

FOCUSING ON OBJECTIVES

A good time-saving habit for you and your colleagues to get into is always to ask yourselves what you expect when you meet to discuss an issue. There is a useful mnemonic – AID – that helps in classifying the options available to you. Is it Advice you need from each other, is it Information, or is it a Decision? At the beginning of each discussion, indicate exactly what you are expecting from each other and you will all be more aware of the demands that the exchange will make on your time. You can also use the AID technique to help you decide how to respond to colleagues seeking your attention.



USING AID OPTIONS

ADVICE

If you are going to give advice to a colleague, make sure that you do it when you have plenty of time available. It is best to give advice only when you are not in a hurry.

INFORMATION

Dispensing information is a one-way process – in most cases it does not require any feedback. Set aside a short amount of time in your day for giving out information.

DECISION

Reaching a decision may well take some considerable time. It is important that you do not allow yourself to be hurried into an overhasty decision by an anxious colleague.

ENCOURAGING OPINIONS

The unique thing about most colleagues is that they can give you dispassionate, on-the-job feedback, which you often cannot get from further up or lower down the organizational hierarchy. Unlike colleagues, seniors and subordinates may think too much in terms of job assessments.

Encourage your colleagues to give you their opinions of your performance. They may raise some helpful points that will save you time in the future. For example, they may let you know that your meetings last too long or are disorganized, or that you appear to be inaccessible to others when they need you. Listen to their advice, and adopt any useful time-saving techniques.

97 Set aside special times when your office is open to all.

98 Visit colleagues only when you have more than one issue to discuss.

MANAGING YOUR MANAGER

Everyone should know how to manage their managers if they want to be able to make the best possible use of their own time. Learn to do this discreetly so that your seniors do not feel as though they are being undermined or manipulated.

99 Be aware of your boss's working patterns, and try to adapt to them.

100 Ask about your boss's home life – it will help build up a relationship.

Bring more than one thing at a time to discuss with your boss

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

The first thing you need to know is exactly what your manager expects of you. Do you have the sort of manager who delegates a task to you and then gives you the freedom to get on with it, or are you expected to report back every day and to wait around until they are free to hear you? Discuss this matter tactfully with your manager early on. That way you can tailor the way you work to fit in with your boss's expectations.

If you decide you would like more autonomy, persuade your seniors to trust you by establishing a strong relationship with them. When you have a good relationship with your manager, you can be less formal; communication becomes easier, more direct, and therefore more efficient.

◀ SORTING OUT QUESTIONS

Take the initiative to arrange a time to see your manager, rather than waiting for your manager to see you. They may be so involved with their work that they do not realize that you need help from time to time.



COMMUNICATING EFFICIENTLY

In any relationship with your seniors, there is an implicit assumption that they are busier than you and that the claims on their time are more pressing than the claims on yours. When you have something to discuss, make your communication brief. Get to the point quickly, and try to anticipate any queries that your seniors may raise. Keep your conversations high on factual content and low on your personal opinions.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do arrive at meetings well prepared and with any relevant documentation. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't volunteer your opinions unless they are requested or you feel they are important or relevant. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do take relevant notes, and give your boss a copy. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't present any problems without offering some viable solutions to them. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gather questions up to avoid constantly interrupting your manager. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't be late for meetings with your manager. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do work out whether your manager prefers written or spoken information, and supply it in that way. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't mistake your boss's occasional thoughtless action for maliciousness. |

GETTING YOUR OWN WAY

As you build up a personal relationship with your manager, you will learn what it takes to get your own way – and thus work more efficiently and with a greater amount of satisfaction. Of course, the priorities of your manager will alter all the time (as will your own), and it is your job to keep abreast of those changes and adapt sensitively to fluctuating demands. Remember that there is little to be gained in being abrasive toward your seniors. This will simply irritate them, making them feel defensive, less willing to listen to you, and unsympathetic to your viewpoint. Try to be aware of the pressures that your manager is under, and be sympathetic.

101 Remember that time is perfectly democratic. Nobody has more or less of it than you.

KNOWING WHEN TO OFFER ADVICE

It is a useful tool to think of communication with your manager in terms of the AID acronym: Advice, Information, and Decision. Offer your boss advice either when it is asked for or when you feel it would be welcomed. However, you should give relevant or important information without constraint. It is often possible to influence your boss to make a different decision to the one he or she was going to make. Remember, though, that there may be reasons behind a decision of which you are unaware.

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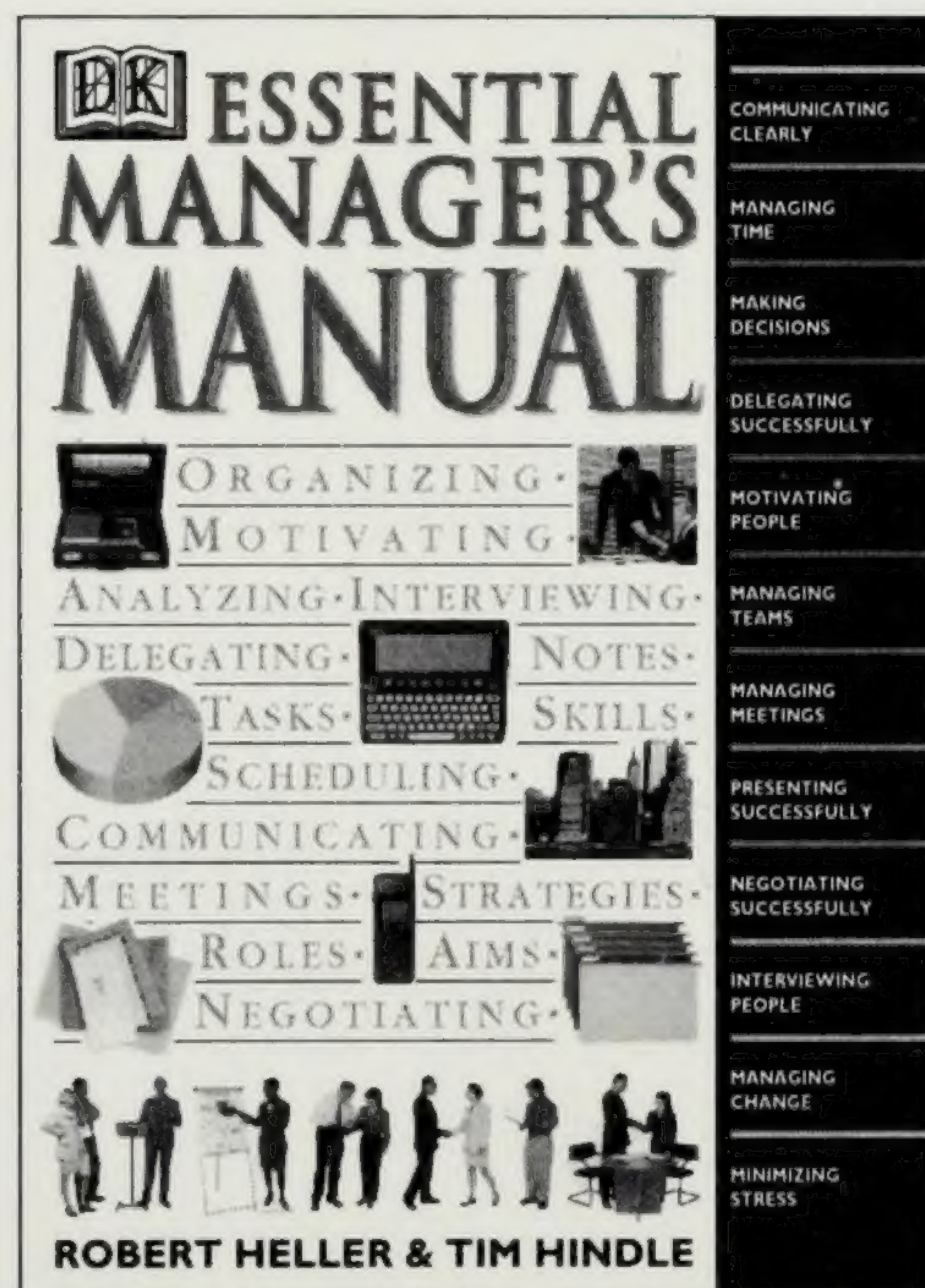
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